We Are Imazighen

The Development of Algerian Berber Identity in Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture

Fazia Aïtel

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To my late father, Arezki, and my mother, Chabha,
both of whom will not read this,
To Lounès, the shooting star, and Tassadit, tafat-iw,
To my sisters and brothers,
Thank you all for making this possible.

Contents

List of Figures ix

List of Maps xi

Acknowledgments xiii

Introduction: The Local and the Global 1

1. The Emergence of Berber Consciousness, 1930–1949 20
2. The First Berber Francophone Writers: The Dialectics of Identity 58
3. Of Berbers and Beurs, France and Algeria: The Struggle for Identity and Rights, 1970–1990 108
4. Rebels in Print and Song: Tahar Djaout, Matoub Lounès, and the Algerian Berber Movement at the End of the Twentieth Century 159
5. Assia Djebar and the Mountain Language: The Return of the Repressed 202

Conclusion 241

Notes 247

Bibliography 277

Index 293

Figures

Figures follow page 152

1. Algerian army tanks in Fort National for the purpose of suppressing the Kabyle rebellion in 1963
2. Kabyle armed uprising against the Algerian government in Azazga (Kabylia), 1963
3. Kabyle soldiers, loyal to Colonel Mohand Ou El Hadj against the Algerian government, guard the entrance to Tizi Ouzou (Kabylia), 1963
4. Concert in Vgayet stadium in the summer of 1993. Sadi, Matoub, Boudjma, Ferhat, and Benyounès
5. Matoub on crutches. Tizi Ouzou, 1989
6. Matoub surrounded by a crowd of supporters in Tizi Ouzou stadium, 1989
7. Portrait of Matoub on the wall of his home, Taourirt Moussa, 2012
8. Entrance of Matoub's village in Taourirt Moussa, 2012
9. Ghiles wears a T-shirt asking for justice for Matoub, Azru N'Thur, 2012

Maps

1. Berber speakers in North Africa xiv

2. Algeria and main urban centers xv

3. Kabylia xvi

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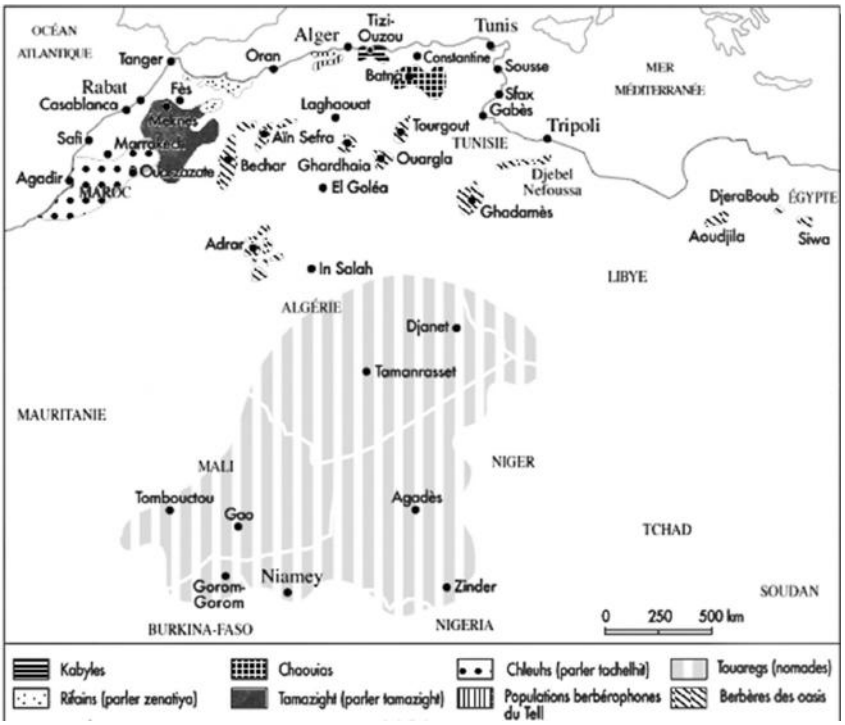
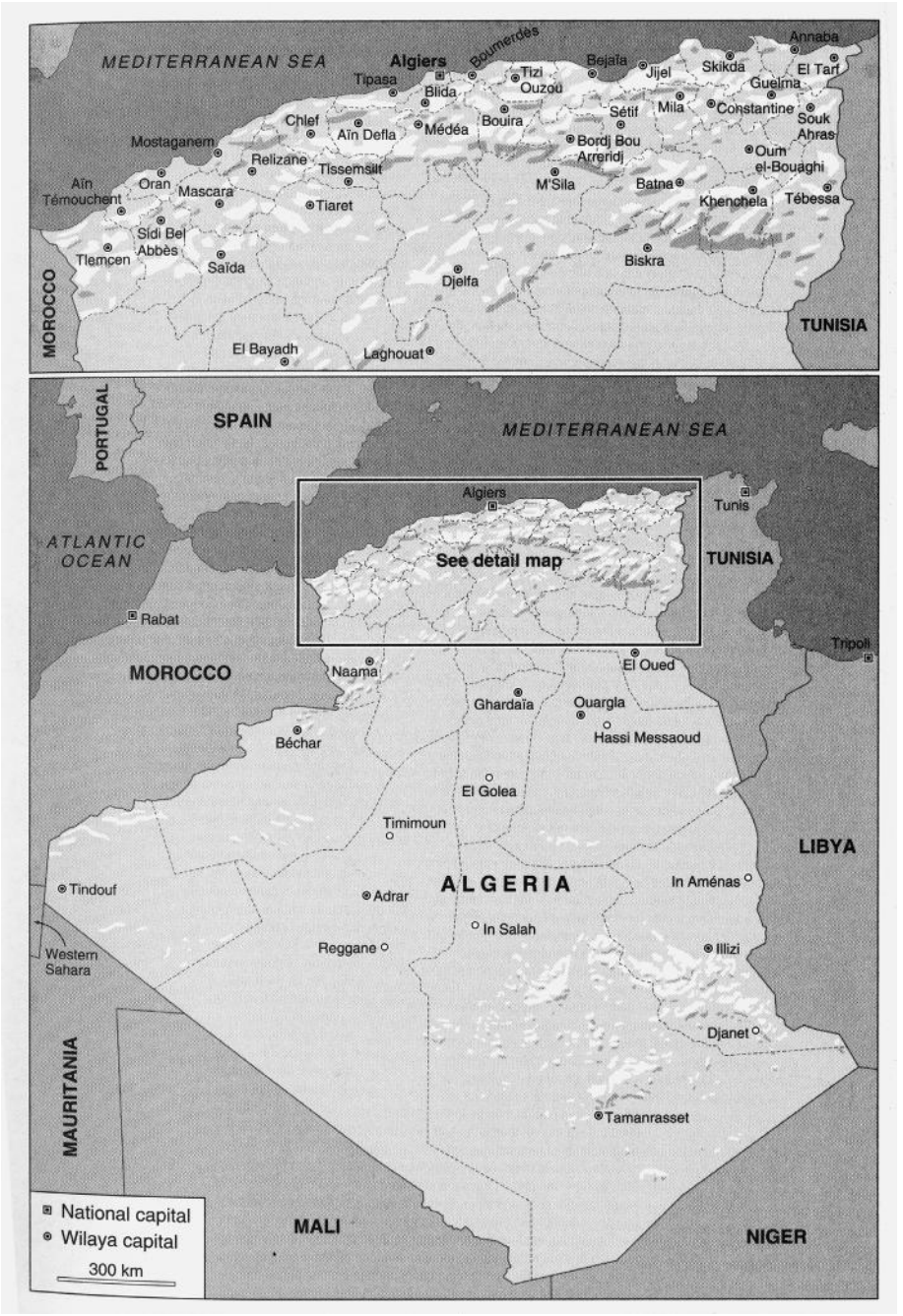
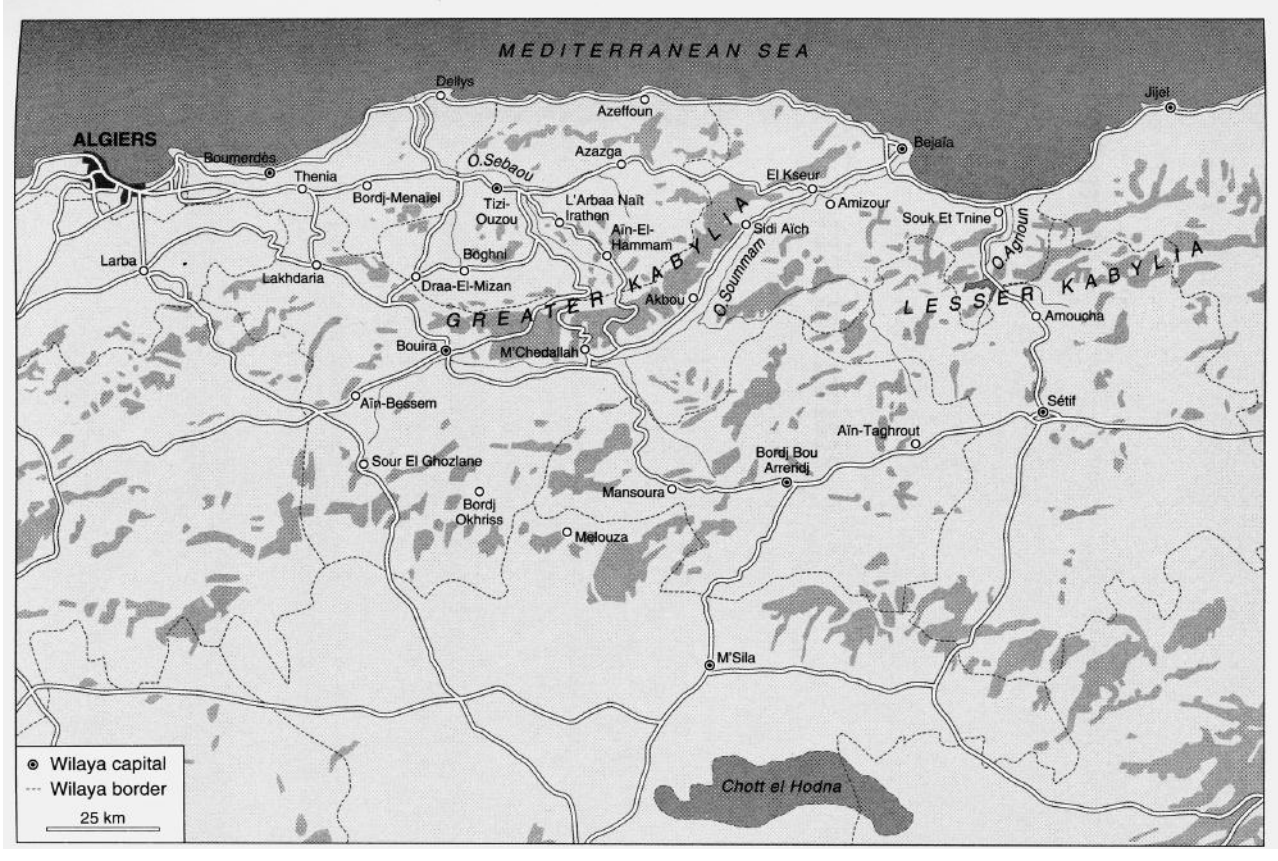


Map 1. Berber speakers in North Africa. *Le Monde diplomatique*, December 1994. Philippe Rekacewicz. By permission of author, Paris.



Map 2. Algeria and main urban centers. *The Battlefield Algeria 1988–2002. Studies in a Broken Polity.* Hugh Roberts. London, Verso, 2003. By permission of Verso, London.



Map 3. Kabylia. *The Battlefield Algeria 1988–2002. Studies in a Broken Polity*. Hugh Roberts. London, Verso, 2003. By permission of Verso, London.

Introduction

The Local and the Global

When I was a small child, after my family had immigrated to France from the Kabyle Mountains near Tizi Ouzou in Algeria, my father purchased a cassette player, because he had recently received a tape from Algeria. My mother, my siblings, and I gathered around him while he put the tape into the cassette player and then, with some collective trepidation, we listened intently to an old, rough voice, that of my grandmother speaking in Kabyle, one of the Berber languages of Algeria. I could not take my eyes off the machine; I stared at it, transfixed. How could this machine, which in my imagination was associated with technological progress and France, encompass my grandmother, who lived in a different world, where the air, people, and houses had different smells, where the sun always shone, and where people looked like my grandmother, with weathered and craggy faces? And how could this language, which was so intimate, almost a secret family language, be available and exposed to the rest of the world in such a way? Worlds were colliding; for me, that moment was electrifying. It almost seemed subversive that technology (which I construed to be on the side of power) could be used to allow the voice of someone as powerless as my grandmother, who lived in a small, remote village in the mountains of Kabylia, to freely and directly speak to her family in France.

A similar episode took place in junior high school in France. My schoolmates and I were on strike and thus were sitting on a bench in the school courtyard, idle. A classmate asked me if I spoke any language other than French, and I proudly said, "Yes, Kabyle." Then another one asked me to say a word in Kabyle, so I said "school" in Kabyle: *lakuy*, a deformation of the French *l'école*. My classmates laughed and laughed, and for several minutes I could not figure out why.

Yes, of course, "*lakuy*" (*la couille*) in French slang means "a testicle," but when I gave them the example, I could not transpose the Kabyle word

into the French context. Many similar experiences made me aware of the eruption of difference at particular and often unexpected moments, always when the intimate, the personal, or the local makes contact with the outside, the world, or the global. Over the years I realized that I—like all Kabyles, dominated people, and other colonized or formerly colonized people of the modern world—inhabit this space between the local and the global, and that while these contact zones are sometimes at variance, they are not incompatible. Instead, they offer a rich experience and the possibility of cultivating something new, a dialectical position in motion between the local and the global.

The Berber writer Nabile Farès once declared, "L'universel, c'est le local moins les murs" (the universal is the local minus the walls).[1] This pithy statement reconciles two seemingly antithetical positions: that of remaining self-sufficient and self-referential (the local, or particular) and the apparent opposite, the synthetic, or a mode of homogenization or consensus (the global, or universal). The term "universality" is certainly overdetermined and brings with it a long-standing and complex debate in philosophical, political, and cultural circles. Figures such as Jacques Derrida, Edouard Glissant, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Homi Bhabha are best known for their work on this topic. Farès' phrase also points to a way out of the conundrum of the right to difference, which is often assumed to mean the exclusion of others, denoting thereby one's refusal to interact with the world at large. Farès presents the notion of difference (the local) without it being exclusive or a threat to others. The absence of walls, that is, the openness of the notion of difference, allows exchanges to take place and changes to happen. On the other hand, the continued existence of difference precludes the full assimilation that some wrongly perceive as the final liberation of the being—that is, the ultimate fusion into oneness.

When the question of the right to difference concerns the Berber peoples, the terms of the debate take a particularly sharp edge, enmeshed as they are in political and cultural dimensions.[2] Simply put, the Berber claim to a continuous cultural and linguistic particularity has been at the core of significant social and political crises in almost every North African nation. It has arisen elsewhere as well, notably in France among its population of North African origin.

Yet the claim to this particularity has been felt most acutely in Algeria, where a Berber consciousness gradually emerged after the Second World War. While Berber requests for recognition of the Berber presence in Algeria were muted during the war of liberation against France, they did not vanish and gained momentum after the country achieved independence

in 1962 and especially in the 1970s, finally coalescing in the Berber movement of the 1980s. This movement questioned the very foundation of the Algerian state, rooted as it was in the Algerian constitution, which states that Algeria has one language, Arabic, and one religion, Islam. In addition to the dismissal and suppression of Berber claims by successive Algerian governments, the legitimacy of these claims was further clouded by the exploitation of the "Kabyle Myth." The latter entailed favorable assumptions about the Kabyles, as opposed to Algerian Arabs, assumptions that had been elaborated by the French during the period of colonization. The myth and its exploitation presented an additional hurdle in the quest for the Berber rights and a new place in Algeria.

This book is about the Berbers, particularly the Kabyles of Algeria, and the rise of Berber identity in modern times. There is a vast archive of documents, studies, articles, and books written on the Kabyles since the French invasion of Algeria in 1830 to the present day. A significant number of contemporary scholars from various disciplines—ranging from history and sociology to ethnology, anthropology, literature, and linguistics—have written extensively on the Berbers of Algeria, especially the Kabyles. There are also political scientists, such as Azzedine Layachi, William B. Quandt, Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, and Hugh Roberts, who have reflected upon the political aspects of the Berber question in Algeria. And finally, there are a few music scholars, such as Mehenna Mahfoufi, Rachid Mokhtari, and Yvette Grimaud. Moreover, there is a similarly important if not more significant corpus that concerns Berbers from other regions (such as the numerous studies of the Touaregs) and other countries, especially the work on Moroccan Berbers. Ibn Khaldun's major work on the history of the Berbers in the fourteenth century remains a precious reference to this day, which clearly shows that interest in the Berbers has never waned.[3] In the nineteenth century and since the colonial invasion, the French have, for obvious reasons, been very inquisitive about the Berbers in general, and there are countless studies, accounts, and even literary exercises published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about the Kabyles.

Not only is there a wealth of research on the Berbers, there are also numerous approaches and methods that examine the Berber question in all its dimensions and complexities in Algeria in the past and present—though there are very few literary studies on Berber writers as a distinct category within Algerian literature and cultural life. Considering the profusion of studies about the Berbers, the present study makes a modest proposal, just as Mouloud Feraoun did in *Le fils du pauvre* (*The Poor Man's Son*) when he decided to respond to the French perspective on the Kabyles by humbly

"painting" himself: "la sotte idée de se peindre" ("the foolish idea of describing oneself"), Feraoun writes, thinking about Montaigne and Pascal's comments. My modest proposal is to simply relocate the Berber question from the margin to the center. Indeed, most studies on the Berbers have been shaped by the idea that Berbers belong to and live on the margin, that they are a minority and are often construed as being in opposition to another group (usually the Arabs).[4] Scholars who dismiss the Berber dimension in North Africa as unimportant or overstated exploit these aspects to their extreme. As for Berber scholars, they often work within the pre-established framework (local knowledge) and sometimes find themselves having to justify their approach and argue for the legitimacy of their position. Here, I am not concerned with a discussion about the categories of "minority" or being "marginal" per se but instead intend to move the Berber question to center stage through two intertwined analytical movements.

The objective of this book is indeed twofold, as I first trace the presence and role of the Kabyles in Algeria's literary scene from the 1930s to the end of the twentieth century, giving special attention to late-twentieth-century cultural and literary figures Lounès Matoub, Tahar Djaout, and Assia Djebar, who is of Chenoua origin. I also address the political and social role of the Kabyles in Algeria during the same period. This study also concerns France, where, aside from that country's role in Kabylia during colonization, it was easier for the Berber community to express and organize itself than in Algeria, especially after independence. Moreover, the descendants of this community participated in important social movements in France that questioned the definition of the French national identity in much the same way that Kabyles have questioned Algeria as a nation.

In addition to uncovering the literary production and tradition of the Kabyles in Algeria and France, I also demonstrate how the Kabyle experience is shaped by the struggle for recognition of cultural and linguistic specificities, an effort that consistently kept the door—or, rather, Farès' wall—open to dialogue with the other, whether with the French during colonization or with the Algerian compatriots afterward. It is in this open gesture, largely illustrated by the oral and written literature and the nonfiction texts examined here, that this local experience can be construed as achieving a universal dimension.

"Nek d Amazigh": From Kabyle and Berber to Amazigh

Although the terms Kabyle, Berber, and Amazigh (or the plural form Imazighen) are interchangeable, they convey different meanings and emotions,

and depending on the period, one term carries more influence or significance than the others. In general, use of the term Kabyle precedes that of the term Berber, which precedes the use of the term Amazigh. I argue that the long development that led to the assertion of Berber identity in Algeria reached its pinnacle with the appearance of the slogan "Nek d Amazigh" ("I am Amazigh"). In addition, the road to this slogan indicates how the claim for the recognition of Berber culture and language built itself around a dynamic dialogue with the other. "Nek d Amazigh," finally, signals an evolution from a communal to a more individual claim and testifies to the progress made since the early 1930s and the ongoing transformation of Algerian Berber claims and identity.

The affirmation of Berber identity is built upon paradoxes and contradictions. The moment that a claim of Berber identity is made corresponds to a reflexive moment when the culture is examined from a distance, which paradoxically signifies a detachment, if not an estrangement, from the very culture one describes or champions. Coupled with this is a romantic vision of the culture that leads to a discrepancy between what is associated with the culture and its actual state. For instance, one aspect of Berber identity often put forth is the organic communal bond that early on was broken with the transformation of labor from unalienated work to a capitalist relationship to labor, a change traceable to wars and immigration.[5] Another example is the village setting, which is considered the original and unique place of Kabyle life. However, over the years many Kabyles moved to cities within Algeria or to the diasporas, while villages themselves became more and more urbanized. Another important aspect that is often held up as the symbol of Berber culture is handmade artifacts and products, such as pottery, rugs, jewelry, and olive oil. Photographs of these items are found everywhere—on greeting cards, in YouTube videos, and in books on Kabylia. However, the manufacture of these products has drastically changed to meet new needs. For instance, while in the past people used to make and use handmade pottery (including plates, pots, bowls, jugs, and candleholders) for everyday purposes, these objects are now often mass-produced for tourists (and for ornamental purposes). In villages, people have turned to plastic, which is not labor-intensive and is cheaper and more practical to use. We find the same paradox with regard to the Berber language, which is often on the brink of being lost even as it is claimed. For example, many of the most ardent militants and champions of the Berber language did not teach their language to their children and are hardly fluent themselves. Here we are facing an interesting paradox, whereby the moment one claims his Berber identity, it is already lost to him/her, at least in the terms that

he/she conceives it. Thus, the moment of claim is also a moment of partial loss.

Does this mean that the Berber culture and language are vanishing? Not quite. The Berber culture and language have been merely transformed over the years and adapted to modern life and needs, which also testifies to their vibrancy. However, the culture's survival and transformation owe a lot to the rise of Berber awareness and to the constant dialogue with the outside and the outsider. The movement that consists of looking at one's own culture and language from an outsider's perspective initiates this dialogue. This dialogue, or dialectic movement, is part of Kabyle culture and is even constitutive of it. I use the term *dialectic* here in its loose sense, to describe the interactions of contradictory or opposite forces that are part of the vibrancy noted earlier and that lead to new cultural forms. Indeed, retracing the process formation and the founding moments that led to the affirmation and claiming of Berber identity in Algeria reveals the interactions that took place between conflicting elements that were part of the Algerian political and social spectrum at the time, such as the French presence and influence or the discourse on Arabness. These oppositions and differences allowed for the emergence of a synthetic Berber identity.

The expression "Nek d Amazigh" reflects this synthesis but also reflects an evolution from a communal to a more individual claim. Broadly stated, the specific term Kabyles (or *lqbayel*) was most often used to refer to the inhabitants of Kabylia before the term Berber became widespread, especially during the Berber Spring, though the word Tamazight appeared on banners during the 1980 spring marches. Over time, the term Imazighen (the plural form of Amazigh) came to be preferred, as it was considered more politically correct. One might argue that the expression "Nek d Amazigh" symbolizes the ultimate stage of the movement in that it expresses a modern subjectivity through its use of the first-person pronoun Nek (I, me). Although the four terms (Kabyle, Berber, Imazighen, Amazigh) have existed and continue to exist alongside each other, each conveys a different sentiment about the culture and, depending on the period, one term is sometimes more influential than the others.

Etymologically, the terms Kabyle and Berber have a foreign origin.[6] This etymology establishes otherness at the core of a most intimate place: one's name. On the other hand, the term Imazighen (or Amazigh)—which is more authentic, since its etymology is Berber and it is the term the indigenous people called themselves even before the Roman occupation—was barely known to Algerians and for a while was essentially associated with Berber militancy, before being integrated into everyday language in Algeria.

Some Kabyles still consider the use of the words Imazighen and Amazigh a trend that excites young people who are inclined toward ideals and superficiality, as opposed to the down-to-earth Kabyle term *taqbaylit*, which refers not only to the language but also to the set of values (such as the code of honor) that accompanies it.

Although use of the term Amazigh/Imazighen extends back in time, its first use as a cultural claim occurred probably in 1945, when a young student named Mohand Idir Aït Amrane composed a poem entitled "Kker a mmis umazigh" ("Rise up Son of Amazigh"). The text is considered the first Kabyle patriotic song. The chorus proclaims:

Kker a mmi-s umazigh!	Get up son of Amazigh!
Itij-nnegh yuli-d,	Our sun has risen
Atas aya ur t-zrigh,	It's been a while since I have seen it
A gma nnuba-nnegh tzzi-d	Brother, our turn has come

And the last two verses:

Si terga zeggwaght ar Siwa	From Rio de Oro to Siwa
D asif idammen a tarwa	Children, the same blood unites us[7]

Although the poem is by nature a nationalist call to rise and liberate Algeria from the colonial yoke, the emphasis here is on Algeria's Berber past and on North Africa's Berber heroes (Massinissa, Jugurtha, and Kahina). The poem also calls for identification with a larger Berber community, beyond the frontiers of the North African states, as the last two verses demonstrate. However, it would not be until the late seventies and early eighties that the word Imazighen would emerge on the public scene as a rallying cry (see chapter 3). Indeed, almost four decades after its composition, versions of the poem "Kker a mmis umazigh" were sung by the famous singer Aït Menguellet and the Djurdjura band composed of three women—who cleverly replaced the word *son* ("Kker a mmis umazigh") with *children* ("A Darya umazigh"). It is significant that this song calls for people's engagement on the basis of their status as sons/children, which underlies the relationship to parents and ancestors dominated by deference and pride. But, like the terms Kabyle and Berber, the term Imazighen is also oriented toward the outside in that it refers to a sense of belonging that goes beyond the village, the region, and even the country to embrace all of North Africa. Thus, the word Imazighen also conjures notions of inclusion, openness, and tolerance.

The use of the word Amazigh, other than as the singular form of Imazighen, is relatively recent, though an early example is writer Kateb Yacine's defiant decision to name his son Amazigh in 1972. The phrase "Nek

d Amazigh" illustrates a new stage in the evolution of the Berber claim in that the personal pronoun I publicly affirms the individual. This is a novelty in a society where the family and the community are supposed to come first. The use of "I" focuses all the attention on the speaker, who is making a personal and existential statement, and delocalizes the site of identity from the community associated with a spatial reference (village, country) to the person. With the shift from "We are Imazighen" to "I am Amazigh" emerges a personalized definition of what it is to be Amazigh, thereby enabling the expansion of its definition. This shift allows the claim "Nek d Amazigh" to also function as a fashion statement, in a way similar to "I love NY" or, closer to our concern here, the comment on Lounès Matoub's T-shirt during an interview he gave on French TV: "I laïc Algeria" (a play on the English verb "like" and the French adjective *laïque*, which means "secular").

Actually, the origin of the expression "Nek d Amazigh" is probably Lounès Matoub's pop song "Assagui Ligh" ("Today I Am"):

Xas herren-iyi rebaâ lehyud	Even if I am surrounded by four walls
Xas lfinga a tt-waligh	Even if I can see the gallows
Xas lhif a yi-d-isud	Even if misery engulfs me
Xas yecced webrid a aâwigh	Even if the road I take leads to an abyss
Ma nnan-iyid s anda tlehhud	If they tell me where you think you are going
A sen-inigh nek d amazigh	I will claim: I am Amazigh

It is perplexing that "Nek d Amazigh," which logically should be a response to the question "Who are you?," here answers the question "Where are you going?" Amazigh in this case could simply mean "free," and thus, the answer to the question is, I can go wherever I want because I am free. This phrase could also suggest that being Amazigh is not just an identity claim but a process in the making, a path that the poet follows, despite pain, misery, and imminent death. Like Kateb Yacine naming his son Amazigh in 1972, Matoub's claim "Nek d Amazigh" in 1981 is an act that testifies to his freedom as an individual and as an artist. The claim is as much about him (me, *nek*) as about being Amazigh. The placing of *nek* at the beginning of the phrase insists on the subject and could be translated as "me, I" and opposes "I" to others. It is in the very insistence to expose the "I" that one can perceive the unasked questions "What about you?," "Who are you?," or "Where are you going?," which keeps open, once again, the dialogue with the other.

Ten years later, in 1992, Matoub's cousin Hamid Aït Lounis sang a song called "Nek d Amazigh," and subsequently "nek d Amazigh" became a catchphrase with all the implications that such popularity entails. Today

the slogan is used to name blogs or title songs, such as those of the rapper Mait. The chorus of Mait's song "Nek d Amazigh" repeats Matoub's famous two verses:

Ma nnan-iyid s anda tlehhud	If they tell me where you think you are going
A sen-inigh nek d amazigh	I will claim: I am Amazigh

Interestingly, this young Algerian rapper's repertoire is mostly in Algerian Arabic. There is no doubt that what it means to be Amazigh continues its diversification and transformation, which follows a new sense of self in a modern and capitalist world.

On Terminology: Algerian, Amazigh, Arab, Berber, *Indigène*, Kabyle, *Pied-Noir*

> Aux Algériens on a tout pris
> la patrie avec le nom
> le langage avec les divines sentences
> de sagesse qui règlent la marche de l'homme
> depuis le berceau
> jusqu'à la tombe . . .
> nous voulons habiter notre nom
> vivre ou mourir sur notre terre mère
> nous ne voulons pas d'une patrie marâtre
> et des riches reliefs de ses festins.[8]
>
> (From the Algerians, everything was taken
> motherland with name
> language with divine sentences
> wisdom that marks the rhythm of man's walk
> from cradle
> to grave . . .
> we want to live our name
> live or die in our motherland
> we do not want a shrew for a motherland
> nor the rich leftovers of its feasts.)

In this passage, from "Le combat Algérien" by Jean Amrouche, the poet speaks on behalf of the Algerian people who want to "inhabit" their "name," an endeavor that is more difficult than it would first appear. The political

and existential stakes entailed in the act of naming oneself and the other were addressed by the writers Albert Camus and Mouloud Feraoun. In a letter to Camus, Feraoun writes:

> Sachez pourtant que je suis instituteur "*arabe*," que j'ai toujours vécu au cœur du pays et depuis quatre ans au centre du drame. Le mot "*arabe*" n'est d'ailleurs pas très exact. Pourquoi ne pas préciser après tout? Il me revient à la mémoire une anecdote qui remonte au 9 mai 1945. C'était en Alsace. Pour annoncer les événements qui, la veille, avaient commencé d'ensanglanter le Constantinois, un journal local étalait ce titre en première page et en gros caractères: "Révolte arabe des Kabyles"! Mettons que vous recevez aujourd'hui *une lettre arabe d'un Kabyle* et vous avez du même coup toutes les précisions désirables.[9] (my emphasis)
>
> (You should know that I am an "*Arab*" teacher, that I have always lived in the heart of the country and now, for four years, at the epicenter of the drama. The term "*Arab*" is not quite exact. Why not specify after all? An anecdote dating back to May 9, 1945, comes to mind. It took place in Alsace. Announcing the events that, the day before, had brought bloodshed to the Constantinois, the headlines of a local newspaper read: "Arab revolt of the Kabyles"! Let's say you received today an *Arab letter from a Kabyle* and you have right there all the details you need.)

In this excerpt, Feraoun claims to be "Arab" but later adds that he is not really "Arab" but, rather, "Kabyle." Arab here is used as an umbrella term referring to the indigenous people of Algeria without any distinction. Indigenous here is to be understood as referring to a person who originates from the place where she lives (from the Latin word *indigena*, meaning a native).[10] In another letter to Camus, Feraoun clearly distinguishes the indigenous people of Algeria from the community of European origin:

> J'ai lu *la Peste* [*sic*] et j'ai eu l'impression d'avoir compris votre livre comme je n'en avais jamais compris d'autres. J'avais regretté que parmi tous ces personnages il n'y eût aucun indigène et qu'Oran ne fût pour vous qu'une banale préfecture française.[11]
>
> (I read *The Plague* and I thought I had understood your book like I had never understood any other. I regretted at the time that, among all the characters, there was no native and that Oran was for you just a banal French prefecture.)

Although Feraoun complains to Camus about the lack of so-called indigenous characters in *The Plague*, Camus, in a later article, claims that the French in Algeria are also *indigènes*.[12] Feraoun responds by declaring:

> Aujourd'hui, je sais comme vous, cher monsieur, que les Français d'Algérie "sont au sens fort du terme, des indigènes." Je souhaite seulement qu'ils en aient conscience. . . . Lorsque les Algériens d'origine européenne nous disent qu'ils sont Algériens, nous entendons qu'ils sont d'abord Français, puis Algériens de surcroît. . . . En vertu de quoi ils sont les maîtres. . . . Lorsque le musulman dit qu'il est Algérien, chacun sait qu'il n'est que cela.[13]
>
> (Today, I know like you, dear sir, that the French from Algeria "are, in the fullest sense of the term, indigenous." I just wish they realized it. When Algerians of European descent tell us they are Algerians, we hear that they are first French and then Algerian. Because of this, they are the masters. . . . When the Muslim says he is Algerian, everyone knows he is only that.)

Feraoun's reaction testifies to the stakes associated with naming the French *indigènes* and suggests that in order to be *indigènes*, the French would have to embrace this "identity" ("qu'ils en aient conscience"), which entails relinquishing their French privileges. To complicate matters further, the community of European origin in Algeria called itself Algérien (Algerian). Feraoun does not disapprove of the European community calling itself Algérien (or *indigène*) as long as they do not benefit from special rights and privileges that elevate them above other *indigènes* and Algériens and as long as they accept being "only" that. It is clear from these few examples that a number of terms associated with Algeria and its people were, and still are, politically charged. In addition, some of these terms shift meaning according to periods, places, and political experience, creating confusion or uncertainty for the reader. For instance, the same person calling herself Algérienne in the 1940s would not do it today but would instead use the term *pied-noir*.[14] To avoid confusion, I identify some of these terms and situate them in their historical context, and I explain my alternating use of Amazigh, Berber, and Kabyle throughout the book.

In this book, the term indigenous refers to the colonial period (especially in chapter 1, which covers the 1930s and 1940s) and designates the people who lived in Algeria before the arrival of the French and other Europeans. The term Algerian was ambiguous during this period, given that the population of European descent also used it to refer to themselves.[15] After

independence, the ambiguity was lifted, and we speak of Algériens (Algerians) to refer to the inhabitants of Algeria, while *pied-noir* refers to people of French or European origin who left Algeria.

As far as the term Arab is concerned, as Feraoun makes clear in the earlier quote, it was often used broadly to refer to the populations of North Africa, whether they were Arabs or not.[16] Moreover, at various points in history, Berber individuals themselves and even whole tribes sought to present themselves as Arab and trace their genealogies back to Islamic civilization in the same way that later on some Berbers claimed Turkish ancestry. Today, a Berber, depending on the circumstances, would either use this umbrella term or would feel the need to specify that he/she is not really Arab, as Feraoun did in his letter to Camus. It is also clear from Feraoun's letter that this distinction does not entail the denial of the term Arab, an accusation used by the Algerian regimes to discredit Berber claims and give a second life to the Kabyle Myth, which will be discussed later.

With the development and strengthening of the Berber movement from the 1970s through the 1980s in Algeria, people have been less reluctant to openly claim their Berberness. The region at the forefront of this movement has been Kabylia, a mountainous region of Algeria, where Kabyle (or Taqbaylit) is spoken. Kabyle is one of several Berber languages in Algeria.[17] The movement was called Berber, as opposed to, say, Kabyle because, although the impetus came from Kabylia and was mostly carried by the Kabyle people, its aspirations went beyond Kabylia and concerned not only other Berber regions but the rest of Algeria as well.[18] Besides, Berber is also an umbrella term that includes all Berbers. Kabyles in the twentieth century, especially during the Algerian War and after, have rarely fought for their interests alone. The exception is probably the development in 2001 of a movement for the autonomy of Kabylia (MAK), composed of disillusioned Berber militants who gathered around former singer Ferhat Mehenni.[19]

And so the very use of the term Berber in the Berber movement is a way to link the local and the global and thereby equally claim the linguistic and cultural specificity of a Berber region while calling for more democratic rights in all of Algeria. The term Berber is now rejected by intellectuals and militants who prefer to use Amazigh, which means "free being," or its plural form, Imazighen.[20] Amazigh is therefore the politically correct term to use. It also points to a cross-national identity, as shown by the creation of the Amazigh World Congress (CMA), the first meeting of which took place in the Canary Islands in 1997; more than three hundred delegates from Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and the diaspora gathered for it.[21] However, the term Berber continues to be used often for

practical reasons: most people know who the Berbers are but are not familiar with the term Amazigh. I deliberately use the term Berber throughout the book because of its etymology, which roots it in the idea of foreignness, a sense that is lost in the use of Amazigh. By continuing to use Berber, I want to establish that foreignness is a constitutive experience of this people and is at the core of the Kabyle group identity and culture. I also use the term Kabyle for the sake of precision, especially when retracing, for example, the Berber movement, which essentially took place within the Kabyle community, though, as stated earlier, its message spread to and impacted other countries in North Africa.

A Word about Berbers

The earliest known inhabitants of North Africa were called Berbers by the Romans, who believed them to be alien to Roman civilization and identified them as barbarians (*barbari*).[22] The Arabs, as reported by Ibn Khaldun, also called them Berbers when they first heard their language. The word *berbera* in Arabic signifies a combination of incomprehensible shouts.[23] As for the geographical area the Berbers inhabited from the origins to the Arab conquest (647 CE), historians of North Africa usually call it Berbérie (Barbary), which includes the region from Egypt to the Atlantic Ocean. After the Arab conquest, the Arabs dubbed the region west of Egypt Djezira el Maghreb (the western island) and, more precisely, Maghreb el-Aqsa to refer to the extreme west of the Maghreb. From the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, when it was used as a base for pirates to raid ships in the Mediterranean Sea, the region was called Barbarie (Barbary) or *les* états *barbaresques* (the Barbary states), which included Algeria, Tunisia, Tripoli, and Morocco. In the nineteenth century, the term Afrique du Nord (North Africa) appeared with other terms such as *Afrique mineure* (lower Africa).[24] However, historian Charles-André Julien argues that in referring to the region before the French conquest, the word Berbérie remains the most adequate, because "though there are Berbers outside of its limits, its population is almost exclusively formed of Berbers."[25]

The history of the Berbers has presented historians, linguists, and archaeologists with a long-standing challenge given the group's perennial and yet diffused presence in this vast geographical space. The Berbers, who were also called Numids (Strabo), Maures (Pliny), Getulians (Sallust), and Lybians (Herodotus) according to various authors and periods, have been the subject of many debates regarding their origin, prompting interesting hypotheses as well as numerous legends. One such hypothesis was defended

by Saint Augustine, Procopius, and Ibn Khaldun, who claimed that the Berbers had descended from the Canaanites chased from Palestine by the Jews who had conquered the country under Joshua. The Berbers were also believed to be descendants of Trojans from Thrace, Celts, Gauls, and even Indians from India. Legend has it that they were survivors of Atlantis before it sank into the sea. In short, the Berbers could be from the Middle East, Canaan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Thrace, Asia, the islands of the Aegean Sea, Northern Europe, the Iberian Peninsula, or Italy. As Gabriel Camps puts it, it is easier to look for countries the Berbers did not supposedly come from. However, from a historical point of view, it is now accepted that since High Antiquity, Berbers have been in North Africa.[26] The historical reality of the millenary presence of the Berbers in North Africa does not invalidate the theories of their worldwide origin, which account for engaging legends and myths. The truth often lies in between; history, legends, and myths are inevitably intertwined.

One interesting characteristic of the Berber people is that their language has always been absent from strategic positions and spheres of power. Though there were Berber kings and queens and some even founded dynasties and empires, they did not rule as Berbers, so they never positioned the Berber language as a language of civilization.[27] The absence of the Berber language from spheres of power, combined with the fact that Berbers have lived in a large mass of North Africa for millennia, creates an interesting paradoxical presence.

Today, there are Berbers in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, the Sahara, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso; and there is, additionally, an important diaspora in the West. According to INALCO (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales), there are more than twenty million Berber speakers, not counting those in the diaspora, such as the one million Kabyles in France. Most are settled people, but some are nomads for whom national frontiers do not matter and who therefore inhabit several countries, notably the Tuareg, who live among Niger, Algeria, Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso.

Berbers speak many variations of the Berber language, which are often not easily understood by other Berber speakers. Thus, to generalize we can say that in Morocco there are Berbers who speak Tarifit (in the Rif), Tamazight (in the Middle Atlas), and Tachelhit (in the High Atlas); in Algeria, Berbers speak Tachawit (in the Aurès), Taqbaylit (in Kabylia), and Tamzabit (in the Mzab), while the Touaregs speak Tamacheq. The well-known linguist André Basset estimated in the 1940s that there were three thousand to five thousand Berber regional dialects or geolects.[28] The

variations and discrepancies among the dialects can be explained by history and geography.

Overview of the Book

This book discusses the Kabyles, one of the Berber groups of Algeria. The Kabyles are largely concentrated in two regions, around the city of Tizi Ouzou and the Mediterranean port town of Vgayet. However, Kabyles are spread throughout Algeria and in the diaspora, especially France, which explains why France is such an important actor in this study.

We Are Imazighen retraces Algerian Berber literary production from the early 1930s—1934, to be precise, the year in which the first published collection of poetry by Jean Amrouche, recognized as the first indigenous francophone poet from Algeria, appeared—to the end of the twentieth century, with special attention paid to the works of Tahar Djaout, Assia Djebar, and the Kabyle singer Lounès Matoub. Matoub is discussed here in contrast with Tahar Djaout and provides a grasp of the Berber experience at the grassroots level that is essential to understand not only the political and social background at work in Algeria but also the constitution of a Berber literary and cultural tradition. This book argues that the Berber literary tradition is based on a dialectic encounter with the other (whether the other is French, foreign, or simply the non-Berber Algerian compatriot), which all of the authors discussed here grapple with in their literary production, making it a bond between the local Berber experience—usually in the village—and the world at large.

We Are Imazighen is organized chronologically and examines four significant periods. The first stretches from the 1930s to 1949 and traces the emergence of a Berber consciousness in Algeria and France; 1949 is the date of the Berberist crisis, a reference to a split within the Algerian nationalist movement, when Berbers deemed the general orientation of the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties party (MTLD, Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques) too "Arab and Islamic."

The second period runs from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, a time when many indigenous writers emerged on the Algerian literary scene. The Berber writers, including those from the so-called 52 generation, are brought together and identified as Berber francophone writers.

The third period covers the post-independence period, stretching from the early 1960s to the 1980s, a period rich in social and cultural movements in Algeria and also in France, where a literary movement dubbed Beur emerged. Here, the Beur writers of Berber origin are brought together

and their novels analyzed in terms of their relationship to Algeria. The final segment concerns the last decade of the twentieth century, a chaotic period including the cancellation of the elections in 1991 followed by civil war. Tahar Djaout's and Lounès Matoub's careers and works are inseparable from the political and social crises that engulfed the country, and indeed, they fell victim to the intolerance that became rampant in Algeria. The examination of Assia Djebar's work is more extensive and includes her literary and film production from the late 1970s through the late 1990s, focusing on her relationship to her Berber origin and her subsequent treatment of the Berbers throughout her novels.

Chapter 1 builds on the idea of Berbers as a constant, but ghostlike, presence in early twentieth-century Algerian literature, without a body and subjectivity. I trace this presence/absence from the Eurocentric colonial Algerianist movement of the early twentieth century (Louis Bertrand, Robert Randau, and Jean Pomier)—which strived to valorize the colony and its European population and affirm the emergence of a "new race" in Algeria—through the liberal Ecole d'Alger formed by writers of European origin (Gabriel Audisio, Emmanuel Roblès, Albert Camus, and others), which envisioned a cosmopolitan and Mediterranean identity that went beyond religious and ethnic differences, and on to the first indigenous writers, from the 1920s through the early 1940s. The latter were caught under the shroud of a double discourse that hindered their literary expression, a discourse not necessarily the same as that of the following generation. The emergence of Berber consciousness and what I call here the first francophone Berber writers in Algeria in the 1940s and 1950s was largely due to schooling in Algeria and the efforts of émigrés, many of whom were Second World War veterans and unionized workers in French industry. In conjunction with other forms of Berber culture, specifically popular music, this grassroots movement opened up a market and intellectual space for Berber writers, such as the Amrouche family and other literary pioneers. Importantly, the unique circumstance under which this writing was carried out was the emergence of the Algerian national movement and subsequent revolution. This chapter thus outlines the formation of Berber identity within the context of nationalist thought and politics in Algeria.

In chapter 2, I examine works by the first francophone Berber writers—who, I argue, were engaged in a dialogue with the colonial system but were also deeply influenced by the oral culture of the Berber village. They saw the village as a fundamental principle of their identity. This situation influenced their fictional work in French and mediated their role in the preservation of their Berber heritage. The chapter first focuses on siblings Jean El-Mouhoub

and Marie-Louise Taos Amrouche, whose family embodies and gives expression to experience of exile and symbolizes ancient and modern aspects of Berber culture. Their family represents the idea of "in-between-ness," standing as they did between a Berber oral tradition and the new world of textuality. The autobiography of their mother, Marguerite-Fadhma Aït Mansour Amrouche, is one of the first North African francophone texts. Her inspiration came from her life story, which overlapped with an oral context where she sang Berber songs and poems to her children, inspiring them and instilling in them a sense of loss and foreignness, a polarity that haunted the careers and lives of both her children, Jean and Taos.

Jean El-Mouhoub, the first francophone Algerian poet, hosted literary radio shows in Tunis, Algiers, and especially in Paris, at Radio France, where he interviewed French writers, such as André Gide, Paul Claudel, and François Mauriac. His sister, Marie-Louise Taos, became a Berber singer and a francophone novelist.

This chapter also examines the works of Mouloud Feraoun, the writer who launched the so-called 52 generation with *Le fils du pauvre*, published in 1950. In this seminal novel, which allegedly "simply" portrays Kabyle society and its people and whose objective is to show that Kabyles are men and women like anyone else, Feraoun achieves much more, since from the very first line of the novel he initiates a dialogue with his French readers and with the French classics without ever losing sight of the particular circumstances under which such a text is produced. During the Algerian War, Mouloud Feraoun was a major humanist figure who strove to build bridges between the different communities in Algeria. In this chapter I also address the work of Mouloud Mammeri, Berber linguist, anthropologist, and writer. In his novels *La colline oubliée* (1952) and *Le Sommeil du juste* (1955) he depicts the major upheavals in a small Berber village wrought by the Second World War, as well as the cultural and psychological ambiguities accompanying the French colonial presence.

Although all of these writers address the ambiguous position of the bicultural individual, it is in Malek Ouary's allegorical novel *Le Grain dans la meule* (1956) that the experience of alienation is pushed to its extreme. In this novel the main character, Idhir Sammer, receives an unusual punishment for the honor killing he committed. He is asked to relinquish his own identity (name, personal history, and family) and take on his victim's.

What these novelists and intellectuals have in common is the dialogue they engaged in with the colonizer and themselves and their anxiety vis-à-vis Berber culture and language, which they believed to be on the brink of extinction. Finally, they also share a commitment to the Algerian national

struggle against French colonial rule that is inseparable from their notion of Berber identity.

Chapter 3 focuses on two important social events in France and Algeria—namely, the Beur March and the Berber Spring—and addresses the Beur literature that emerged in France during this period. The question of Berber identity is not limited to Algeria proper and is important in the context of recent French history and even today's debates about citizenship and national identity. In this chapter, I first consider the Berbers in the French *banlieue* (the immigrant suburb), where in the late 1960s and early 1970s groups of Berbers reflected upon Amazigh identity and formed reading and study groups that recovered and recognized a distinct history and culture, as well as a rich oral tradition. This background work led to the Berber Spring of 1980, a major cultural and political event in Algeria. In France the 1983 Beur March was the first event to proclaim the existence of a French youth of North African descent. The Beur March was organized by descendants of Berber and other North African immigrants, who were joined by other segments of the French population.

It is in literature that the Beurs have synthesized their experience in rich textual narratives and thereby claimed a place/space that is, again, in between and contingent. The Berber and Beur movements overlapped and shared common members and objectives (such as challenging the identity principle of their respective states: Who is French? Who is Algerian?), although they differed in important ways and coexisted while ignoring each other. I examine these two major cultural and political events, paying special attention to the music that emerged and provided a space for Berber militants and the French youth of North African descent to meet and mingle.

In chapter 4, I examine two central figures of Algeria's cultural scene in the 1990s, the Kabyle singer Lounès Matoub and the writer-journalist Tahar Djaout. Matoub was a popular musician and public persona who virulently criticized the Algerian regime and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria; he was assassinated in June 1998. In this chapter I trace Matoub's rise to fame, from his 1978 debut album, *Ay izem anda tellid* (*Oh Lion Where are You*?), to his last album, released in 1998, *Lettre ouverte* à . . . (*Open Letter to . . .*), addressed to the Algerian government. This album includes a controversial song against the Algerian regime that Matoub sings in Berber to the music of the Algerian national anthem. The inclusion of a singer in this book, which otherwise mainly discusses literary texts, might seem curious. However, Matoub is much more than just a committed singer. During his life, he was the pulse of Kabylia. Moreover, given that

Berber culture is mainly oral, it seems fundamental to hear the voice of one of its most influential artists.

Matoub is discussed in contrast with his compatriot and friend Tahar Djaout. Djaout was a Berber francophone writer and journalist vigorously opposed to the Algerian state regime. In the 1980s his articles and creative works denounced the Algerian government, its bureaucracy, and the rise of religious fanaticism. In turn, he was criticized as anti-Algerian by various state-aligned figures, as well as by Islamist parties. The fact that he wrote in French was also construed by some Algerians as a way to impose an alienated Western view of the world onto Algerian readers. Djaout was assassinated in Algiers in 1993. In this chapter I focus on his novels, *L'invention du désert* and *Les chercheurs d'os.* The latter is an enigmatic allegory of post-independence Algeria based on a narrative about a long journey out of a Berber village. Matoub and Djaout, assassinated for their strong, public stances, represent two different ways of articulating Algeria's cultural life and torments at the end of the twentieth century—one inside the Berber village, the other outside it. However, they both fought for the same objectives: a more open, democratic, and secular society in Algeria.

The final chapter is about the work of Assia Djebar, an Algerian woman writer of Berber origin who is probably the most accomplished and well-known contemporary Algerian writer. In her fiction, Djebar mainly deals with her fraught relationship with the French language and the place and voice of women in Algerian history and Islam. In her novel *Vaste est la prison*, published in 1995, Djebar for the first time comes to grips with the Berber dimension of her identity. In this chapter I first examine the road to *Vaste est la prison* and uncover the presence of the Berbers in Djebar's previous texts. This exercise could be read as a continuation (or *mise-en-abîme*) of what Djebar does in *L'amour la fantasia*, when she revisits French accounts of some episodes of the colonial conquest of Algeria to retrieve the history of the vanquished. The Berbers are indeed present in Djebar's texts but are overlooked until *Vaste est la prison*, which signals a shift in Djebar's appreciation of her Berber ancestry. This chapter explores Djebar's representation of the Berbers and Berber language in her fiction and non-fiction writing and in her film, *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*.

1

The Emergence of Berber Consciousness, 1930–1949

> In matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse. Evasion has fostered another, substitute language in which the issues are encoded, foreclosing open debate. The situation is aggravated by the tremor that breaks into discourse on race. It is further complicated by the fact that the habit of ignoring race is understood to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture. To notice is to recognize an already discredited difference.
>
> Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*

In his 1970 novel, *Un passager de l'occident*, Algerian Berber writer Nabile Farès detects a spectral presence in American literary texts that he identifies as that of African Americans. This constant presence, he argues, is paradoxical, for it is a presence that is really an absence. This absence/presence permeates much of mainstream American life and culture, and Farès finds it in many of the most acclaimed texts by white American novelists, such as William Faulkner. He addresses this phenomenon through his own literary rendition—that is, in *Un passager de l'occident*—of his encounter with the African American writer James Baldwin. Farès' insight here came twenty years before Toni Morrison's study *Playing in the Dark* was published, wherein she argues that literary criticism has fallen short of providing a full reading of American literature. Morrison explores blackness (and whiteness) in the literary imagination of white American writers in order to tease out the necessary if not constitutive function of these "ghosts" for a dominant white public.

Morrison's preface to *Playing in the Dark* starts with a discussion of Marie Cardinal's novel *The Words to Say It* and includes a notable reference to Algeria.[1] Still, the first connection between Algeria and African Americans comes from Cardinal herself, who recounts how shaken she was after hearing jazz legend Louis Armstrong play for the first time:

> My heart began to accelerate, becoming more important than the music, shaking the bars of my rib cage, compressing my lungs so the

> air could no longer enter them. Gripped by panic at the idea of dying there in the middle of spasms, stomping feet, and the crowd howling, I ran into the street like someone possessed.[2]

So I turn again to Toni Morrison and the passage quoted about the African American presence in American culture—I argue that this echoes another ghostly presence, that of the Berbers in Algeria. To my reading, the most powerful aspect of the quote is when Morrison points out the way the issue of race has been—and still is, in many ways—avoided or ignored in the United States, and yet this gesture is somehow deemed graceful and liberal. One could say that the same is also true for Berbers in Algeria. In Algerian urban circles, to dismiss or ignore one's Berber origin or background used to be construed as a gesture of politesse, for Berbers were usually associated with backward, vulgar, and primitive behavior. Recently, however, and in a subterfuge akin to the American liberalism of Morrison, the discourse has shifted, and now authority figures in Algeria and Morocco claim that all their citizens are Berbers, thereby preempting any assertion of singularity that may emerge from the Berber regions of these countries.

The insights of Morrison and Farès will help us understand how Berber ghosts haunt North African literature, especially that of Algeria. However, the approach taken here differs from that of Morrison in that major literary texts are not simply a means to uncover a Berber presence in the work of non-Berber writers, for Berbers have not disappeared from North African texts in the same way that African Americans have been erased. Indeed, the Berbers' presence in Algerian literature is constant but ghostlike, unacknowledged, or overdetermined. This chapter traces the Berber presence in Algeria's early twentieth-century francophone literature (the Algerianists, the École d'Alger through the first indigenous francophone writers), as well as the early literary mediations that contributed to the emergence of francophone Berber writers. I also identify the Algerian social and historical context that enabled the emergence of a Berber consciousness in the late 1940s and that of a Berber francophone literary tradition to be discussed in the next chapter, for I believe that in the field of literary criticism, the Berber literary tradition constitutes a new approach to North African literature in general and to Algerian literature in particular.

Singling out the Berbers: A Singular Project?

The Berber presence, which is also an "Africanist presence" (Morrison's phrase), is not to be sought between the lines, for, despite everything, the

Berbers are everywhere; they are hiding in the open. Indeed, from a historical or sociological point of view, most of the North African population is Berber in origin, although today most North Africans who live in cities and outside of the Berber regions have lost their everyday ties to the Berber language and cultural practices. There are, however, regions where there are Berbers who see themselves as Berbers first and who still speak the language and claim their cultural and linguistic difference. Thus we confront the paradox of a group who is simultaneously an unseen and undeclared majority and a minority whose existence is denied or barely tolerated.

In Western social science, there is a long tradition of linguistic, anthropological, and historical literature on the Berbers by notable figures such as Marçais, Basset, and more recently the anthropologist Ernest Gellner. It may seem that, far from being neglected, the Berbers have been overanalyzed. However, outside of these few academic disciplines, Berbers are usually lumped together with the more or less imagined community known as the "Arab Muslim" population, or given the simple designation "indigenous population." In Algeria, Berbers have either been ignored or their claims have been curtailed by the Kabyle Myth, which I will explain shortly. North African government authorities and allied intellectuals have downplayed or collapsed the Berber presence to fit within other traditions and languages in North Africa. There are multiple reasons for this situation, although, as Partha Chatterjee has pointed out, this is typical of anticolonial stances and strategies taken by postindependence governments, where questions of ethnicity, race and gender were circumscribed into narrow nationalist concerns.[3] On the other hand, the vigorous politics of Arabization implemented throughout North Africa tied the region to Egypt and pan-Arabism, downplaying North Africa's ethnic diversity and ties to Africa. Moreover, these policies were especially misguided and harsh regarding the Berber populations.

When we turn to the question of Berber literature, it is not surprising to discover that Berbers are either absent or drowned within the general aesthetic and discourse. Indeed, Berber writers and their literary production are not usually identified as such but, rather, have been assimilated into their respective national origins (Algerian, Moroccan). Berber writers have been taken for granted or dissolved into broad and generic terms, such as Maghrebian, Muslim, and Arab. Other all-encompassing designations include North African and, most recently, Middle Eastern, a designation that nearly every writer from North Africa refuses; unfortunately, this designation is used especially in American academia, without much examination. To complicate this problem further, almost all of the texts in the Berber

tradition that will be discussed in chapter 2 were not written in the writers' mother tongue but almost exclusively in French. This language choice provides the first slippage, among several others, that in a strange turn gives a clear specificity to the Berber experience. Indeed, at the core of the Berber experience is a tension between two sides—sometimes developing into a split or a divided self (*dédoublement*)—as well as its corollary, the constant presence of the (non-Berber) Other within the Berber subject.

Scholarly negligence or ignorance, as discussed in the following pages, is also a factor in the dismissal of the Berber dimension in the corpus of North African literary texts. Paradoxically, one way of neglecting Berber writers and the Berber presence in North Africa is to acknowledge Berbers in the past—as noted earlier, there is a plethora of books on the history of the Berbers, as well as on archaeology and anthropology, and we might also include here Henri Basset's essay on the literature of the Berbers, which is similar to an anthropological document.[4] Even contemporary Berbers are studied mostly from an anthropological angle, so there is a large and rich anthropological literature on the Berber populations in the twentieth century.[5] However, the scarcity of studies on Berber literary history and tradition reinforces a widespread idea that the Berber population has vanished over the centuries. This idea is so prevalent that to speak of the Berbers today is considered a kind of social and cultural exhumation, hence the importance of having this literary tradition recognized as legitimate and part of the modern world and Algerian national literature. Social and political claims, as well as events emerging from the Berber region of Kabylia, have also often been downplayed or dismissed as the work of outside or foreign agitators and agents. Berbers were even denounced as a creation of France.[6]

Some scholars, such as Azzedine Layachi, understand the claim for linguistic and cultural specificities only as the result or symptom of economic problems that, as the reasoning goes, then mutated into identity issues.[7] This analysis denies that identity claims can arise independently or in conjunction with or alongside political or social issues. While the economic and social situations are certainly significant factors, these explanations overlook too much in recent history; after all, the riots of 1980 that led to the Berber Spring were sparked by the cancellation of a lecture on Berber poetry. If we follow Layachi's reasoning, once the Berber regions of Algeria enjoy a fair share of the country's affluence, the cultural and linguistic claims will cease to exist, as will the specificity of the region. This analysis implicitly dismisses the legitimacy of the claim for a right to difference, along with the complexities of history and intertwined social, cultural, and political mediations. This blind spot could lead to totalizing declarations,

such as the ones made by Algerian authorities that the whole country is Berber; even the Algerian president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, declared that he is Amazigh, and that Algeria is Amazigh. Again, far from addressing the issue constructively, this kind of declaration actually leads to across-the-board dismissal of the cultural and political claims of Algeria's Berbers.

The academic dismissal of the place of the Berber literary tradition within the larger North African literary tradition is often subtle, as with the use of the adjective Arab as a common descriptor for all texts from North Africa. One needs to cite only two examples in order to show how the erasure occurs. First, there is Khalil's *The Arab Avant-Garde Experiments in North African Art and Literature.*[8] The title is misleading and misguided, since many of the texts examined in the book are written by Berber writers, not Arabs. Another example is a 1994 anthology that for the most part presents Berber writers, yet is titled *Littératures francophones du Monde Arabe anthologie.*[9] In fact, in the introduction to this anthology, there is no mention of the Berbers, even when referring to the Berber-led 1871 insurrection in Kabylia against the French presence in Algeria.[10] One of the main arguments made in the introduction is that francophone writers are caught between two languages, French and Arabic. Tamazight, the language of Berbers, is not acknowledged.

Yet the question of the Berbers within academia is even more complex, for there are also scholars who defend the idea of diversity in North Africa yet fail to fully acknowledge the diversity that Berbers represent. In these works, the concept of diversity as a principle is often endorsed—even championed—but rarely finds support beyond its theoretical framework. One of Morocco's leading intellectuals, Abdelkebir Khatibi, articulates sharp and penetrating observations about bilingualism, decolonization, and the genre of the autobiography. In his theoretical study *Maghreb pluriel*, he elaborates a new approach to the notion of difference and even coins a conceptual phrase, the "*pensée-autre*," which undermines notions of linguistic and cultural hegemony. This alternative mode of thought emphasizes dialogue, openness, and *métissage*. Through it, Khatibi advocates diversity and plurality in the Maghreb without dismissing the region's Western heritage, which he argues needs to be acknowledged as well as criticized.[11] He writes,

> Tout reste à penser en dialogue avec les pensées et les insurrections les plus radicales qui ont ébranlé l'Occident. . . . Engageons-nous d'emblée dans ce qui est réalisé devant nous et essayons de le transformer selon une double critique, celle de cet héritage occidental et celle de notre patrimoine, si théologique, si charismatique, si patriarcal.[12]

(Everything has yet to be thought through as part of a dialogue with the most radical thoughts and insurrections that shook the West. . . . Let's engage first with what has already been done and stands in front of us and let's try to transform it by using a dual critical approach, that stemming from this Western heritage and that originating from our own, so theological, so charismatic, so patriarchal.)

Khatibi argues for a new mode of existence based on self-questioning, transcending the claim for difference, a condition that is already a conflicted state. He therefore asserts a double identity, one inherited from the Western world and one defined by the North African legacy.

Yet, no matter how attentive Khatibi is regarding pluralism in North Africa, he nonetheless undermines this very notion of diversity when, in *Penser le Maghreb*, he endorses the founding text of the *Union du Maghreb Arabe* signed in Marrakech in February 1989. Khatibi presents its main principles as follows:

> Sur quels principes ce texte est fondé? D'abord sur un principe d'unité crée par la religion, la langue et l'histoire, c'est-à-dire sur une communauté de destin.[13]
>
> (What are the principles behind this text? First, the principle of unity of religion, language and history, a common destiny.)

It is clear here that the language and the religion Khatibi refers to in order to realize North Africa's unity are Arabic and Islam, respectively. The principles stated here are inconsistent with any meaningful notion of diversity. The idea of an Arab Maghreb implies the nonrecognition of millions of Berbers who are not Arabs and do not consider themselves to be Arabs. And while Islam is practiced throughout North Africa, its practice varies widely, and there are some North Africans who are not Muslim. Therefore, the argument that there is a community based on Islam is debatable, given its exclusive nature. The problematic aspect of "Islamic unity" is evident in the long and bloody civil war that has crippled Algeria, a war partly fueled by religious extremism.

One is left to ponder the chasm between this reasoning and Khatibi's inspirational comment, a kind of slogan for a multiform and dialectical understanding of North Africa: "une pensée qui ne soit pas minoritaire, marginale, fragmentaire et inachevée, est toujours une pensée de l'ethnocide" ("a thought that is not a minority thought—marginal, fragmentary, and incomplete—is always a thought of ethnocide").[14] Khatibi was referring here to the process of mental decolonization and the search for a "*pensée-autre.*"

The project of distinguishing Berber writers from other writers in North Africa could be construed as an essentialist gesture or an attempt at dividing the country or nourishing separatist sentiments. Two recent examples illustrate my point here. In his preface to Mehenna Mahfoufi's study *Chants Kabyles de la guerre d'indépendance*, Mohammed Harbi, a well-respected historian of the Algerian War, makes several comments that question the legitimacy of a study on Kabyle songs. He starts by suggesting that the title should be "Algerian songs of Kabylia" instead of "Kabyle songs." Although Harbi acknowledges that Kabyles have a common identity, he warns the author about the danger of "ethnism" and reminds him that "the genesis of a people is not a genealogical process but a complex historical process."[15] Moreover, in stating that Kabyles should not view *métissage* as a denial of their Berber past, Harbi clearly invokes the charge of essentialism. According to Harbi, Mahfoufi, whose specialty is ethnomusicology and who has been researching Berber music for twenty years, should have done a thematic study that would have included other languages, i.e., Arabic. Had he done that, claims Harbi, he would probably have reached the same conclusions: "we would have discovered behind the variety of languages used the same hope, the same patriotism, and the ambivalence to tradition and religion."[16] It is remarkable that a study about songs on Algerian nationalism is the object of such strong suspicion simply because the songs are in Kabyle. And one wonders how a nationalist militant, a historical figure, and a famous historian such as Mohammed Harbi cannot transcend the visceral distrust vis-à-vis the Kabyles. In a different place and time, Mahfoufi's study would be valued and celebrated for its vital contribution to Algerian patrimony instead of being the object of criticism based on fears of division that seem to be embedded in any study concerning Berbers.

My second example comes from a conference I attended in February 2010 in Paris. The conference's title was "The Kabyle Song in France and the Memory of the Immigration." Despite the title of the conference, I heard comments regarding the fact that the papers were only on Kabyle songs. Given the fact that some of the singers discussed also sang in Arabic, some claimed that there should have been comparison and discussion of the Arabic songs as well.

It is interesting to note that discussing North African texts as belonging to other subcategories—national, ethnic/racial, religious, or specific to other minorities or oppressed groups—has not otherwise been met with defiance or hostility. I mentioned the Arab denomination, and there are also anthologies and studies discussing writers from North Africa as belonging to a regional (Maghreb) or national (Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian)

literature, and even belonging to a religious (Jewish or Muslim) or gender category.[17] But studying Berber writers as Berbers seems to be a risky endeavor unless the writers in question are presented as part of a mosaic of cultures in North Africa.[18]

One may wonder why and how there is such an extensive history of suspicion regarding the Berbers. Many explanations are available. One obvious explanation comes from colonial history, when the French overemphasized the differences between Arab and Berber populations and deemed Berbers closer to them physically, culturally, and religiously than the Arabs. These differences were used in a strategy to "divide and conquer," which led to the establishment of Berber policies, especially in Morocco, such as the infamous Berber Dahir in 1930.[19] A first edict had been implemented in 1914, stating that Berber tribes were to be administered according to their own laws and customs. In 1930 the Berber policy provoked an explosion of anti-French sentiment throughout Morocco's cities.[20] The origin of the French Berber policies in Morocco is to be found in neighboring Algeria, where the Kabyle Myth was created. In the nineteenth century, Kabyles were the primary case study for colonial archaeologists, ethnologists, linguists, philologists, and many other engineers and scholars from the French academia and intelligentsia, who all tried to work through and prove their new theories with Berbers as their means to an end. For instance, some proposed that since civilization was linked to industriousness and a settled life, the Kabyles, who led a settled life, should be deemed more civilized or closer to civilization than the Arabs, who lived on the plains and were nomads. Thus was born the Kabyle Myth, which established a mindset and a colonial binary wherein Kabyles were extolled and Arabs denigrated.

Contrary to the conclusions of some studies, the Kabyle Myth did not develop into a specific policy in favor of the Kabyles in Algeria.[21] In a well-documented and thorough study, historian Patricia Lorcin traces the ideological apparatus behind the observation and study of the indigenous population by the French and carefully examines the development and evolution of the myth. While she is most interested in the depiction of the 1830–70 French intellectual scene and its impact on the representation of the Kabyles, Lorcin contributes to the demystification of an old belief, stating definitively that the French colonial administrators, despite their admiration for Kabyles, never implemented any favorable policies for them. She declares, "It was a myth that never became policy in Algeria, for no pro-Kabyle colonial legislation was ever passed."[22]

Again, this myth was propagated during the nineteenth century by French scholars who, based on their observations, deemed Kabyles closer

to their notion of civilization than the Arabs. From then on, the myth was constantly brandished by both officials (sometimes including Berber speakers) and those who opposed Kabyle claims. The revival of the Kabyle Myth and the allegation that Kabyles endorsed it led many to question the Kabyles' motives and patriotism, especially during the war of liberation, despite the group's considerable participation and importance during the independence struggle. After independence, the myth was revived to link any Berber claim—be it social, political, or linguistic—to a colonialist discourse. Moreover, the false claim that Kabyles wanted to divide the country and secede was always a useful trump card for the Algerian government when dealing with the rebellious Kabyle regions. This political instrumentalization of the Kabyle Myth also influenced Kabyles, who often downplayed their Berberness for fear of being called a traitor, "*hizb Fransa*" (the party of France), or a secessionist.

Another important reason for the historic distrust of the Berbers is rooted in the Berberist crisis of 1949, which I will discuss in detail later. This crisis refers to the first serious divergence within the nationalist movement between the direction of the Party of the Algerian People (PPA) and some of its Kabyle members who opposed the "Islamic-nationalist" tendency (and authoritarianism) of party leader Messali Hadj. These PPA rebels also wanted to introduce the Berber dimension into the organization to make it part of the future independent Algeria. The movement was brutally suppressed, but the crisis remains the pivotal point for a divergence among Algerians.

Finally, Berbers interfere with Algeria's identification as a totally Arab state. In April 1962, at the Tunis airport after his release from prison, Ahmed Ben Bella, the man who would become the first president of independent Algeria, vehemently exclaimed, "We are Arabs, Arabs, Arabs!" The need for such a passionate declaration indicates, paradoxically, that there is no unanimity on the subject of Algerian identity, especially among the negotiators of the peace accords (Accords d'Evian). The end of colonialism meant that Algeria had to define itself as a nation, and Ben Bella and others after him opted for a Middle Eastern–aligned Arabo-Islamist identity. But Berbers—Algeria's spoilsports, as it were—through their mere existence and sometimes through their fierce resistance have prevented Algeria from fitting neatly into the Arab mold.

These elements give some perspective to the project of writing about the Berbers and distinguishing them from the rest of their compatriots, a project that could be dismissed as inappropriate or divisive. However, it is important at this juncture to state once again that the objective here, in this

chapter and elsewhere, when we sift through Algeria's early francophone literature, is to detect and reveal a Berber presence within this same literary tradition and especially to locate significant Berber writers. This project is not intended in any essentialist sense, so I do not isolate Berbers from their compatriots in order to extol them separately but rather to identify them within a specific literary tradition that is found in turn within a larger Algerian literature.[23]

The Berbers, the Algerianist Movement, and the École d'Alger

Since the French conquest of North Africa in the early nineteenth century, a nascent Algerian literature in French slowly emerged in the colony, albeit one that was produced mainly by French colonists. From this early colonial literature emerged the Algerianist movement in the 1920s, which carried forward the colonial project and provided it with a strong doctrine. The two principal figures at the origin of this movement were Jean Pomier and Robert Randau (the pseudonym of Robert Arnaud). Both were colonial administrators and writers and both wanted to define and champion the new culture and "race" that, they argued, Europeans had formed in Algeria. Randau's 1907 novel *Les colons* is the first novel written about Algeria by a French native of the country. It is also the first literary attempt to represent this Algerian identity.[24] The purpose of the novel, which describes—and perhaps proclaims—a new, strong, and sensual "race," is to claim Algeria's autonomy and to give this new "race" an identifiable literature, or as Randau puts it, "an esthetic autonomy." Indeed, the Algerianist writers positioned themselves in opposition to French writers from metropolitan France and French writers who wrote about North Africa in the mid- to late nineteenth century. The latter were mainly travelers, such as Eugène Fromentin, Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, Ernest Feydeau, Théophile Gautier, and Pierre Loti. They created a socioliterary imaginary that orientalized Algeria, emphasizing the pleasures of the unknown, as well as the confusion and discomfort it provoked. Their travels called into question their French identity, and these writers often felt discomfort with the colonial project.[25] Orientalist texts became the vehicle for articulating conflicts of identity, a vision that the Algerianists rejected. Instead, they portrayed a robust Algerian identity and claimed to describe the reality of the country without romanticizing or orientalizing it.

The Algerianist movement found a platform with the establishment of the literary and artistic journals *La revue de l'Afrique du Nord*, published in 1921, and *Afrique*, published in 1924, and the creation of the Association of

Algerian Writers (Association des écrivains algériens). Writer Louis Bertrand is the precursor of the Algerianist movement. He was born in France and arrived in Algiers in 1891, and he explored and fleshed out this Algerian identity in his first novel, *Le sang des races*, published in 1899. Bertrand's novel is a good example, if not the epitome, of this new Algerian identity in literature, and is especially evident in passages that bluntly valorize the colony and its European inhabitants. As Seth Graebner says, Bertrand's "work would not valorize palm trees, camels, or other exotic backdrops (and certainly not Arabs) but instead the new farms, cities, roads, ports, and the Europeans building them."[26] To France, which they viewed as weak and delicate, Algerianists opposed the energy and vigor of the colonists. Alain Mahé rightly sees, in this exaltation of nature, youth, strength, and work, echoes of a fascist discourse, where rural values are extolled and the weak, the arts, and urbanity are despised.[27]

The establishment of this new identity in Algeria required the near erasure of its non-European inhabitants, at least to allow for the sociocultural imaginary to cohere and function. As a consequence, Arabs and Berbers are almost totally absent or invisible in this colonialist literary vision. Peter Dunwoodie notes that

> Bertrand's grand narrative thus had a triple objective for European Algeria: to eradicate the (present of the) indigenous population, to colonize the past by inventing for the European settlers the roots which would legitimize their as-yet historically recent presence, and to hijack the future via a vision in which youthful Algerian energy would revitalize the enfeebled mother country.[28]

Therefore, Bertrand downplayed the historical role of the Arabs and Berbers and developed the notion of Latin Africa, which links the Latin presence (from the Roman Empire) to the French presence in the nineteenth century, justifying by the same process the French colonial system and enterprise. Bertrand comments in the preface to *Les villes d'or Algérie et Tunisie romaines*:

> En rentrant en Afrique, nous n'avons fait que récupérer une province perdue de la Latinité. . . . Simplement pour avoir mis cette idée en lumière, j'ai restitué à nos colons leurs titres de noblesse et de premiers occupants. Héritiers de Rome, nous invoquons des droits antérieurs à l'Islam.[29]
>
> (By going to Africa, we only reclaimed a lost province of the Latin world. . . . By highlighting this idea, I gave back to our colonizers their

nobility and their claim as first occupiers. Heirs of Rome, our claim predates Islam.)

The basis of Bertrand's claim for a Latin Africa is largely archaeological and rests—literally—on ruins: the Roman vestiges and artifacts spread throughout North Africa. He establishes a Latin and therefore French antecedence to the Arab presence that came later and that, as he argues, unlike the Romans, neither shaped nor significantly influenced the region. Even the Berbers who were already present in the region and could claim a living link back to and beyond this Latin presence in North Africa are simply dismissed. For Bertrand, Berbers have not contributed to civilization and are to be ignored. Bertrand claims that during the Arab invasions, the African elite had left North Africa for the north (Spain, Sicily, etc.) and only "the inferior layers of the population" (les couches inférieures de la population) were left.[30] These inferior layers of the population were the Berbers, whom Bertrand calls "the miserable," who still offered resistance to their oppressors but finally had to capitulate.[31] This interpretation of history lends itself to the conclusion that the European settler is the only real Algerian, the prototype of a new race in the making, and the French presence is merely the return of the Latins to their ancestral land.

Bertrand was an avowed and unabashed imperialist and devoted himself exclusively to the Latin colonist he depicted as essentially superior to Arabs and Berbers. However, some artists and writers of the Algerianist movement for whom Bertrand was a precursor, though they respected and admired him, were less radical or had slightly different views about Algeria, as shown by the presence of indigenous characters in Algerianist novels by authors such as Ferdinand Duchêne. When Bertrand presented a paper titled "La résurrection de l'Afrique latine" ("The Resurrection of Latin Africa") in March 1922 in Algiers, Maurice Olivaint, a contributor to the weekly publication *Annales Africaines*, wrote a report called "La sauce romaine" ("The Roman Sauce"), wherein he declares: "À force de voir des Latins en Afrique, M. Louis Bertrand n'y a vu que des Latins, il n'y a plus vu ni Arabes ni Berbères; et à force de ne point les voir, il est presque arrivé à cette conclusion qu'il n'y en avait point" ("By seeing Latins in Africa, Mr. Louis Bertrand only saw the Latins and did not see the Arabs or the Berbers, and by not seeing them, he has almost arrived at the conclusion that there were none").[32]

The views of Robert Randau, an admirer and disciple of Bertrand, also appear to diverge from those of his friend when he includes Algeria's indigenous population in his vision of a future Algeria. In his preface to . . . *de*

Treize Poètes Algériens, an anthology that brings together poets of European descent from Algeria, Randau, the "African Kipling," envisions the emergence of a new people in Algeria created from the fusion of all its peoples: the "Franco-Berber people." Here, the term "Berber" is meant to be polysemic. It is an umbrella term that refers to the indigenous people of Algeria, including the Arabs who are not Berbers. Let us recall that today's North Africa was called "Barbary" or "the Barbary states" from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, and historians such as Charles-André Julien write about Berbérie when referring to the region before the French conquest. But the use of the term "Berber" also allows Randau to justify the colonial enterprise by directly connecting Europeans from Algeria to Christian and Roman North Africa, bypassing centuries of history before (the Berber presence) and after this period, especially the Arab invasions and the Ottoman rule. Randau mentions Saint Augustine, Apuleius, Tertullian, and Saint Cyprian as models of the Berber soul, which he claims is echoed in the present anthology that offers the most recent representation of this "âme berbéresque."[33] Randau argues that the "Franco-Berber people" will emerge from the Algerian "compost" and the fusion of all the peoples in Algeria.[34] Only, very little will remain of the indigenous peoples other than their bodies, which will be empty shells, for Randau expressly states that the culture and the language of this new people are to be French. The fact that Randau's imagined people do not retain any aspect of Arab and Berber life and civilization does not cause any concern, just like in the Algerian anthology for which he wrote this preface, where the poets who are the precursors of this new people are all French. The French component to Randau's thought here is so overwhelming that, in the end, one wonders what distinguishes this new people from the French in France. Sensuality, voluptuousness, force, and sun, answers Randau. He writes:

> A vrai dire, il m'apparaît indéfinissable; qui nous décomposera le bouquet du bourgogne ou celui du bordeaux? Il s'exhale, en tout cas, et fort capiteux, des poèmes réunis dans notre anthologie. . . . Le soleil a pénétré nos poètes jusqu'à l'âme . . . le culte de la force est à la base des croyances de nos poètes. . . . Notre poésie raffole de luxe barbare; elle réclame outre les splendeurs sensuelles, les lourds brocarts, les soieries à couleurs crues.[35]
>
> (Indeed, it seems to me to be indefinable; who could diffuse the bouquet of Bourgogne or Bordeaux? It wafts from the poems gathered in our anthology. . . . The sun has saturated our poets' souls . . . the cult of force is the basis of our poets' beliefs. . . . Our poetry loves barbarous

luxury; in addition to the sensual splendors, it claims the heavy brocades and bright color silks.)

The Algerian poets who, Randau argues, represent their people and who synthesize their aspirations (synthètise les volontés de la foule) glow with the Algerian sun.[36] The distinctive features of these poets—that they are formed by the sun, their sensuality, and force—are reminiscent of some of the stereotypes associated with the works of earlier Orientalists, stripped of their sentimentality, whom the Algerianists condemned. Suffice it to look at some titles of the poems that appear in *. . . de Treize Poètes Algériens*, where indolence, sunshine, and sensuality figure alongside references to French classical literature and Greek and Roman mythology: "Mauresques aux Terrasses," "Bab-el-Oued," "Casbah," "L'orient," "Porte de l'Orient," "O Sindbad," "Les Parfums," "Indolences," "L'oisif," "Graal," "Le bain d'Artémis," "Carthage," "Chez Vénus," and "En lisant Ronsard." Arabs and Berbers rarely appear in this anthology except as a background to everyday life in Algeria, as, for example, half-naked children, blind beggars, and merchants. In their form, the poems follow nineteenth-century classic French poetry (sonnets and alexandrines) with little originality, while in France at that time Guillaume Apollinaire and Jacques Prévert wrote original and innovative poetry that announced the surrealist revolution. These elements render Randau's account of the emergence of an "aesthetic autonomy" and intellectuality in French Algeria less convincing. More importantly here, Randau proves unable to conceive of and then include those he calls the Berbers (that is to say, Arabs and Berbers) as full-fledged members of his imagined "Franco-Berber" people, for he remains caught in the contradictions of the colonial mentality. Rather, his preface, which is an Algerianist manifesto and as such represents an act of faith toward Algeria and to the new "people" (Randau also writes about "race") in the making, reveals a blind spot in the Algerianist doctrine. Indeed, unlike, say, Bertrand, the Algerianists—a neologism Randau created—do acknowledge the existence of the colonized population, for they see them, yet the Algerianists remain incapable of considering the colonized fellow human beings actively participating in Algerian society with an integral role to play in Algeria's future. To do so would require questioning the colonial system, which none of the Algerianists were willing to do.

In Randau's preface to *. . . de Treize Poètes Algériens*, the use of the word Berber is, then, essentially ideological. As for the liberal and all-inclusive project suggested by the phrase "Franco-Berber people," it turns out to be implausible given the prerequisite that the Muslim populations strip themselves of their specificities and assimilate into French culture.

Randau's vision of the so-called Franco-Berber people is also realized in his novel *Cassard le berbère*, which portrays a settler of Berber origin named Cassard who personifies the future Franco-Berber individual. When the novel was published, it was discussed within the larger context of the controversy surrounding the attribution of the first Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Algérie in 1921. Robert Randau and Ferdinand Duchêne were the two best candidates for the award. The prize ultimately went to Duchêne, but amid the controversy regarding the decision of the prize selection committee members, the literary value of *Cassard le berbère* came to be discussed, as well as the reasons why it was not selected. While some found it "brutal" or "immoral," the journal *L'Afrique latine*, whose political views are clear from its title, saw in *Cassard le berbère* an exaltation of Latin energy, contrary to the novels of Duchêne, who was seen as complacently exalting the indigenous peoples' "torpor and squalor."[37]

This ideological and rhetorical opposition between the two writers is puzzling. Consider that Randau, who envisions a Franco-Berber people based on the fusion of two different peoples (European and indigenous), is viewed as the painter of the settlers' soul, while Duchêne, who introduces indigenous characters in his novels but keeps them separate from the settlers—a gesture that emphasizes the clear difference between the two people and, maybe, their incompatibility—is viewed as the painter of the indigenous. In fact, *L'Afrique latine* made no mistake in recognizing Randau as an advocate of so-called Latin Africa in *Cassard le berbère*, for the Berber protagonist named Cassard is a richer and more sophisticated version of the European settlers in Algeria, a difference he owes to his intelligence, his rich culture, and his life of exploits, adventures, and travels. Cassard is clearly the product of French civilization in its linguistic, political, and philosophical refinement, while his Berber dimension is shown in his propensity toward piracy, violence, savagery, and sensual pleasures. Upon close examination, it becomes apparent that Cassard's two sides occasionally come into conflict.

Cassard is a descendant of Moorish warriors, who during the Islamic invasion settled in Provence, France. They called themselves the "Nas'alksar," "the people of the citadel" in Arabic, which later became "Nas-alkassard" and then, simply, "Cassard." The protagonist's ancestry is traced to a corsair who received from his friend the Dey, a citadel among the Berber tribes who welcomed him. The corsair lost the fort, but his descendant, Cassard's grandfather, a *spahi* of General Youssouf who participated in Algeria's conquest, recovered the citadel.[38] The protagonist, Cassard, and his sister, Romaine, are thus descended from a line of adventurous ancestors,

and Cassard himself spends a large part of his life traveling, exploring, and waging war. After a rather long prologue on Cassard's origins and ancestry—Randau portrays Cassard as a man rooted in the history of Berber North Africa—the novel opens with Cassard's return to Algiers from Europe, where alongside the French he distinguished himself in the war against the Germans. His arrival in Algiers is triumphant, as the public gathers to greet him. Cassard's time at the fort, or Bordj, is spent thinking about his wife, Hélène, convalescing in Switzerland, taking care of the Bordj's business, and receiving guests in a luxurious setting. His domain is full of antiques, souvenirs, and bibelots from around the world, for Cassard is also an art collector. Cassard is a sort of lord or sultan who is committed to his Algerian motherland and to French civilization. He is essentially a meditative character (for he is also a writer), although his love of action is alluded to throughout the text. He finds an outlet in this regard in the "Arab rebellion," which he is committed to personally suppressing. This episode reveals Cassard's perverse desire for violent action, exposing his "native" side, but also, more importantly, offers surprising commentary on Algeria's indigenous peoples. Again, in his preface to the Algerian anthology, Randau includes the different Muslim populations in his future Franco-Berber people and never distinguishes between the Berbers and the Arabs. In *Cassard le berbère*, Randau not only distinguishes between the Arabs and the Berbers but also adopts all the stereotypes that contrast the "bad" Arabs with the "good" Berbers. During the rebellion against the settlers, which is the exclusive doing of the Arabs of the plains, all the clichés of the Kabyle Myth are resurrected and trumpeted to praise the Kabyles and demonize the Arabs. While the Kabyles are portrayed as intelligent, courageous, and unanimously supporting Cassard and the colonial authority he represents, the Arabs are described as religious fanatics and hysterics. The ethnic-division card is played well when Randau describes the Berbers' long-lasting resentment against the Arabs:

> En l'âme des berbères fermentait la haine de ces fellahs qui, jadis, avaient converti leurs ancêtres à l'Islam par le sabre . . . il parut à chacun des soldats, bien loin dans sa conscience, qu'il avait quelque chose à venger.[39]
>
> (In the Berber soul was brewing a hatred of these fellahs who, in the past, had converted their ancestors to Islam by the sword . . . it seemed to each of these soldiers, far back in their consciousness, that they had something to avenge.)

This vision of Berbers' hatred of the Arabs is presented in contrast with the Berbers' brotherly bond with the French, as the episode of the French and Berber soldiers joyously fraternizing in a cabaret after the battle shows.[40] Even the derogatory term *bicot*, or *bic*, is used in Randau's novel to refer only to Arabs. After the rebellion, a Frenchman declares:

> C'est des propres-à-rien ces bicots. . . . Avec les Kabyles . . . c'est pas la même chose; intelligents comme nous ils sont. Avec quatre millions d'eux et un million de français qu'y a en Algérie, demain, ca fera un peuple, hein. Et ça sera fini des misères qu'on nous fait de Paris.[41]
>
> (They are good for nothing, these *bicots*. . . . With the Kabyles . . . it is not the same thing; they are intelligent like us. With four million of them and one million French who are in Algeria, tomorrow, it will make a people, right. And we will be done with the miseries from Paris.)

The idea of the Franco-Berber people here is a discursive means by which the settlers might break away from France's yoke and retain control over the country. It also suggests an alliance with the Kabyles (Berbers) against the Arabs. However, the Arabs in the novel—who Cassard declares have three-quarters Berber blood ("ils sont au trois quart de sang berbère"[42])—are divided into two categories: a minority made up of religious fanatics who initiated the rebellion, and the majority, who are fellahs and who, according to Cassard, can be "regenerated" ("Nous les régénèrerons"[43]); the verb suggests a pseudo-scientific, racist theory of evolution. Cassard, Randau's alter ego, shows hope for the indigenous people.[44] He states:

> Mon avis est que l'Algérie ne prospérera jamais si l'indigène n'est pas avec nous, s'il ne devient pas un être pensant, travaillant et conscient de lui-même, comme nous.[45]
>
> (My sense is that Algeria will never become prosperous if the native is not with us, if he does not become a thinking being, working, and conscious of himself, like us.)

This reasoning contrasts with Randau's description of the Arab rebels two pages earlier, whom he describes as "hordes," "wild animals" (*fauves*), and men possessed by God (*possédés divins*).[46] The violence of the language used and the distinction he draws between Arabs and Kabyles during the rebellion are intriguing, especially given that Randau (and Cassard) was an Arab speaker and an Arabophile. His attitude calls attention to a deep-seated

fear of Islam, which appears as the one obstacle to the total integration of the indigenous populations into French civilization. By comparison, the Berbers' practice of Islam usually appears less threatening than that of their Arab coreligionists. In addition, new circumstances emerged in the aftermath of the First World War. Historian Gérard Crespo argues that after the First World War, French and Algerians discovered two common enemies: the Germans and Arab nationalism.[47] Thus, Randau's commendation of the Kabyles in *Cassard le berbère* is not based on any particular sympathy or knowledge of the Kabyles but hinges on the rejection of Arab nationalism and Islamic religious fervor. This is a good example of the way in which Berbers in general were pitted against Arabs and were used to advance diverse agendas—Berbers and Arabs being merely the object of internal colonial debates until they invited themselves into the debate. Despite its title, *Cassard le berbère* does not offer any insight into Berber life or culture, and the few indigenous words that appear in the text are Arab words. In this novel Randau merely implements the ideas he presented in his preface to the Algerian anthology—namely, that for the colonized to be part of a future Algeria, they must undergo serious changes. After eliminating the few Arabs considered too fanatical to be assimilated into French civilization, the colonized will be stripped of their coarse ways and bad instincts and will be civilized, as with Cassard himself, who went through a series of fundamental transformations and had to "struggle against the instincts of his race, which was violent and irascible" ("Il eut à lutter contre les instints de sa race, violente et irascible"), and for several years "he worked at civilizing himself" ("il travailla à se civiliser").[48]

Contrary to what Claude Liauzu claims, the Algerianists did not truthfully acknowledge a partially Berber origin.[49] The reason they were not "repulsed" by the idea of "a partial Berber origin" is because it refers to a distant past disconnected from the present. As discussed earlier, this claim also provides a link to an ancient past that validates Europeans' presence in Algeria: it is not by chance that Cassard's wife is called Hélène and his sister Romaine. To refer to a vague and distant Berber past that preexisted the Latin presence itself is mainly a strategic claim and a small, though partial, concession to make to Algeria's reality.

In the literature of this period, Berbers (Kabyle, Moorish, Mozabit) also appear in novels and short stories as indigenous characters who are no different from their Arab counterparts. One such example is in the short story "Broumitche et le Kabyle" by Charles Hagel and Louis Lecoq. In this text, Broumitche, a forty-year-old settler of Italian origin, is a fisherman who lives a contented life. Broumitche becomes violently attracted

to thirteen-year-old Debia. He catches her attention with a piece of jewelry and rapes her. From then on, Broumitche brings her trinkets and gifts in exchange for her silence and submission. Debia's father, Hadj Meziane, spends his time poaching Broumitche's fish in order to feed his large family. Broumitche lets him steal from him, believing he is repaid with the pleasure Meziane's daughter provides him. Despite his loving Debia, Broumitche hates Meziane, and when Debia announces that she is about to be married to another Kabyle and that she wants to stay and live with him, Broumitche devises a plan to lure Meziane to his house and kill him. As compensation to Meziane's family, Broumitche offers to take care of Debia. This short story reveals many of the colonial conflicts of the time and, of course, the conflicts' central sexual component. Interestingly, Algeria is presented in this text as the place where illicit sexual activities are tolerated and where the perpetrator might even boast about his "deeds." Broumitche's story is told as a love story, that of a conqueror. He saves Debia from an unwanted marriage and outsmarts her father before killing him. Broumitche is a white man saving a brown woman from a brown man, a typical case of the colonizer-colonized relationship that Spivak discusses in her famous article "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

As far as the Berber aspect is concerned, Broumitche and the authors do not use the term Kabyles to distinguish the Kabyles from the Arabs. By turns, Broumitche calls Debia "Arabe," "Mauresque" (Moorish), and "Kabyle." Her father, Hadj Meziane, is also called either "le Kabyle" or "l'Arabe" throughout the text. Moreover, the few times when Broumitche speaks to Debia in what he thinks is her language, he speaks in Arabic. For instance, to ask her name, he says, "Ouach mek?" and when he tells her to go home, he says, "Amchi l'trek." The interchangeable use of the terms Arab and Kabyle and the confusion between the two languages demonstrate that the distinction between the two groups is irrelevant to the authors.

Other writers are more discerning, because professional obligations bring them into close contact with the indigenous populations. Their knowledge and observations of the country and its people are an inherent part of their work. Such is the case of novelist Ferdinand Duchêne.[50] In his novels Duchêne depicts the region of Kabylia, which he knew well through his practice as a legal expert in the region. His novels are replete with true stories, which, as he declares, he uses to tell the truth about the indigenous people and show that the society he describes is worthy of appreciation. He also exposes social and behavioral problems, so that Muslims might rid themselves of these "deficiencies" on their own, though "under the affectionate gaze of France, our common mother."[51]

One of the most interesting aspects of Duchêne's novels is the paratext, the material around the actual text, including subtitles, dedications, prefaces, notes, and footnotes. They provide much information about how the novels were written, to whom, and why. Duchêne's dedications are addressed to French colonial figures, such as Commandant Jean Hanoteau (*L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss*), Colonel Godchot (*Au pied des monts éternels*), and Mr. Louis Paoli, former head librarian at the University of Algiers (*La Rek'ba*) and seem to continue an established representation of the indigenous people among the French colonial administrators or the French-educated elite in Algeria. The notes and footnotes are addressed to the French reader in France and Algeria. For example, at the end of *Le Berger d'Akfadou*, Duchêne adds a note to the reader who wants to know more about the Kabyle society or verify the events described in the novel and provides a short bibliography on Kabyle customs and the status of women in Kabyle society. At the end of *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss*, besides the suggested reading, Duchêne insists on the authenticity of the cases and characters mentioned in the novel, adding a reference to an academic article he wrote on the case presented in the novel. In the same note, Duchêne affirms that he can provide evidence and references for every chapter in the entire series of the "Barbaresques" ("il n'est pas un seul chapitre de toute la série des 'Barbaresques' que je ne puisse immédiatement appuyer d'une référence").[52] *La Rek'ba* opens with a five-page "declaration," where Duchêne focuses again on the realism of his writing. The assurance that he can provide testimonies, copies of judgments, and other proof that what he writes actually took place, roots his novels in reality and objectivity but also in utility and morality. Indeed, in his declaration, Duchêne claims to tell the truth to oblige people to think ("Souligner la vérité afin d'obliger à réfléchir")[53] and to serve the good ("Dire le vrai afin de le faire servir au bien").[54] Duchêne's novels are offered as mirrors of indigenous life and customs with the indubitable seal of authenticity and suggest the changes that need to be implemented to improve the lives of the indigenous. Duchêne's ultimate hope is to bring Christians and Muslims closer to each other through progress and unity.[55] Interestingly, the indigenous are excluded from these paratextual spaces that link the text to the reader and to the physical world outside the text, despite the fact that they are the subject of the novels and inhabit the world that the stories consider.

Subtitles usually either provide additional information about the novel or succinctly characterize it. Most of Duchêne's novel's titles are followed by subtitles that add an ethnic flavor to them (e.g., "*Roman berbère*" for *Au pied des monts éternels*, "*Roman Kabyle*" for *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss*, and

"*Histoire d'une vendetta Kabyle*" for *La Rek'ba*). The terms Kabyle and Berbère suggest a cultural specificity that Duchêne's expertise and honesty will unveil to the reader. Indeed, Duchêne worked extensively in the Algerian region of Kabylia as a colonial administrator and was therefore familiar with the region and its people, and had privileged access to the cases brought before the French tribunals. So what does Duchêne, the reliable informant, tell us about Kabyles and Berbers in his novels? To best answer, we should briefly look at three of his novels: *Au pied des monts éternels*, *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss,* and *Le Berger d'Akfadou.*

Au pied des monts éternels is the story of Si-Mohamed-ben-Ali, a French-educated and former noncommissioned officer who fought in two campaigns in the French army. Frustrated that his loyalty and service went unrewarded, he proposes ridding the region of a wanted criminal in exchange for a job in the French administration. After accomplishing his mission, Si-Mohamed, although foreign to the region, is appointed *caïd* of the Beni-Thour. The rest of the novel follows Si-Mohamed's genuine attempts to change customs and laws he finds particularly reprehensible, unjust, or backward, such as corruption and vendettas. Over time, however, Si-Mohamed realizes the impossibility of his task. People rebel against him, and on one occasion, his stables are set on fire and his entire flock destroyed. By the end of the novel, it is Si-Mohamed who changes and reconciles with his people and their traditions.

Au pied des monts éternels shows the difficulties encountered when one attempts to implement any meaningful changes in Kabylia. In a note preceding the novel, Duchêne speaks of the immutability of Berber life and of Berber guile, depravity, and pride.[56] And these are the features that distinguish the Beni-Thour who appear throughout the novel. In contrast, Si-Mohamed, the new *caïd*, embodies the qualities that the French want to instill in the Kabyles: loyalty, honesty, and faith in the French law and justice system. Still, despite his goodwill and numerous interventions, Si-Mohamed fails to bring any significant change to the Beni-Thour, who are portrayed as perfidious, unreliable, ungrateful, and following obscure and barbaric customs and laws. The novel conveys a sense of inexorable fatality regarding progress and evolution in this region. Interestingly, the novel does not contain a single Berber word. When indigenous words are included in the text, they are Arabic words such as *rek'ba* (vendetta), instead of the Berber equivalent, *tamgart*. This element is significant, for it indicates the particular circumstances under which Duchêne was working and the limits of his experience. Indeed, as a legal expert, Duchêne's experience was mostly limited to litigation and tribunals, a place Kabyles made every effort to avoid.

In his 1950 book, *Justice française et coutumes kabiles*, written for French magistrates in Kabylia, Georges-Henri Bousquet differentiates two types of legal systems in the colonies: the old, indigenous one preexisting the conquest, and French justice, the only legal and official one. Despite the illegitimacy of the old legal system, it prevailed:

> Il n'est pratiquement pas une affaire (civile) qui soit portée directement devant nos juges; mais il faut insister encore sur ce point: "en Kabylie, presque tous les procès se terminent par transactions" (H. L.) et lorsque nos juges sont saisis d'une affaire, c'est seulement lorsque toute une série de tentatives, d' "arrangements" ont échoué: intervention de parents, de notables, de marabouts, intervention de la djemaa enfin; on ne peut même pas dire que la justice française soit considérée comme une instance supérieure, mais seulement comme une instance parallèle aux précédentes.[57]
>
> (There is almost no civil case that is presented to our judges, but I insist on this point: "in Kabylia, almost all trials are treated through transactions" (H. L.) and when our judges are presented with a case, it is only when all other possibilities have failed: the intervention of parents, leading citizens, marabous, and finally the *djemaa*; we cannot even say that French justice is considered as a superior instance, but only as an instance that is equivalent to those that came before it.)

Thus, the appeal to French justice was extremely rare and always a last resort. Bousquet recounts the testimony of a lawyer who affirmed that during the two decades he was settled in a village, no one ever turned to the French judicial system in order to settle an issue; however, officially there were only French judges in Kabylia. And so to return to the absence of Berber words in Duchêne's novel, it is probably due to the fact that in tribunals, which were both official and foreign spaces for the majority of people, Arabic was used (by lawyers or other mediators) as the intermediary language with the colonial administration.

There is a similar absence of Berber words in *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss*, where some of the indigenous characters even develop in the colonial legal milieu. *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss* tells the story of Arezki, the son of a wealthy and cunning moneylender named Zemmour. Arezki, the main character, and his father, Zemmour, work closely with the French justice system and speak French, Arabic, and Berber. This particular setting entails prevalent use of Arabic. Arezki was a brilliant student at the French Lycée, though he was recently called back home to assist his father in his

practice and was already nicknamed "Sidi-Flouss" ("Mr. Money" in Arabic). Arezki witnesses his father's methods, which consist of bribes, fraud, false testimony, and the general exploitation of people's poverty and illiteracy. Following tradition, Zemmour chooses a wife, Safia, for his son. Safia is a related young cousin who went to the French school and who befriended the teacher's daughter, becoming, over the years, a friend of the family. When Zemmour dies, Arezki realizes he is at the head of an immense fortune. Soon people previously cheated by his father come to threaten him. To protect himself, Arezki signs a legal document giving half of his real estate to extended members of his family—the interests of which can be enjoyed immediately—but, the document stipulates, at the time of his death, his family will inherit his possessions on the condition that he died a natural death. And so the greedy family takes turns providing Arezki with bodyguards while Arezki also hires a French assistant to sort out all the pending cases in his father's practice. He has the assistant do so in a righteous manner, adjusting some cases and releasing some of the debtors. One day Safia overhears her family plotting to murder her fiancé, Arezki, and seeks help from her teacher, Mme. Vilmot, thereby saving Arezki's life. Safia and Arezki marry, and with the encouragement of her former teacher and family, Safia goes through several transformations, including her appearance (haircut, clothes) and the way she relates to her husband in public. When their son is born, Arezki loses his protection, for the legal document he signed becomes invalid: the child is now the only legal inheritor. It is Safia who suggests the ultimate solution: to give away part of their wealth to the poor of a different clan in exchange for the clan's protection. Arezki, the *évolué*, follows her advice and signs a document where the transaction appears not as a gift but as a standard sale, which circumvents the issue of inheritance. Safia's plan is successful, and the novel ends with a major feat: Safia and Arezki kiss in front of the teacher and her family. This gesture, highly objectionable outside of a French setting, announced the entrance of the couple into the realm of civilized people.

Clearly, this novel rests on the successful evolution of the couple, Safia and Arezki, toward enlightenment and civilization, as conceived by Duchêne. Arezki is described from the outset as an educated young man, having learned the Greek and Latin mentality while poets and philosophers sowed the seeds of clarity and rectitude in his "primitive mind."[58] Safia is awakened from the "indigenous torpor" by her French schooling, and every move she makes is presented as its direct result. For example, when Safia writes a letter to her teacher to seek help for her fiancé, in addition to the actual letter she writes, the idea to do it, her courage, and the risk she takes

are presented as the "oeuvre" of Mme. Vilmot. Mme. Vilmot is the one who instills in Safia's "primitive brain" the foundation of a European mentality ("la création dans ce jeune cerveau primitif d'une naissante mentalité européenne"), without which she would have remained in her "animal stillness" ("quiétude animale").[59] In this novel, progressive French ways are constantly opposed to the Berbers' backward way of life, especially regarding the status of women, one of Duchêne's favorite topics. As an administrator, Duchêne invested much time and energy trying to improve the juridical status of Kabyle women.[60] However, as we can deduce from the presence of words and even short dialogues in Arabic, and the absence of Kabyle words in *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss*, Duchêne had no real access to the world of Kabyle women per se. His familiarity with women's issues is derived from his knowledge of the laws that govern women's legal rights and from cases brought to the French tribunals. As mentioned earlier, cases that made their way to the French tribunals were rare, and those involving women even rarer. Thus, Duchêne's theories and claims about women were founded on legal knowledge and access to exceptional cases rather than originating from an actual awareness and meaningful understanding of actual women's issues.

It is in *Le Berger d'Akfadou* that, comparatively, we find a number of Berber words used in context. The novel is set in a village near the Akfadou forest, where two shepherds, Laïdi and Lakri, fall in love. Laïdi begs his father to ask for Lakri's hand, only to find that the dowry requested by her father is higher than expected. In order to make up for the difference, Laïdi leaves the village to work as a harvester. While he works very hard, barely eating in order to save every penny, Malki, a richer suitor, offers a larger dowry to Lakri's father, who accepts. Laïdi, alerted by his family, returns to the village, dejected. The wedding takes place and things seem to have settled, but one day Laïdi and Lakri flee together and take refuge in the Akfadou forest. A few days later, Lakri's father and brothers find them and bring her back home; Laïdi follows behind. Both runaways are severely reprimanded, though Lakri's punishment is much harsher. Their return is followed by difficult negotiations between Lakri's father and her spouse, Malki, who imposes conditions for Lakri's return to his house. Fueled by the feud between two opposing groups (çofs), the conditions become more demanding and ultimately involve banishing and then murdering Laïdi. Several times Laïdi tries to bring himself to leave the village, in vain. He finally decides to stay and face his fate. The novel closes on Laïdi's execution by a hired murderer while tending his flock on the mountain.

Le Berger d'Akfadou reads like a pastoral novel where the couple's love

is innocent and pure. Unfortunately, the two nonetheless violate the law of the community, and so it ends in the ineluctable death of Laïdi. The novel is set in the Kabyle Mountains, and this setting is reflected in the use of Kabyle words such as "*kermouss*" (prickly pears), "*tir'ilt netouless*" (the girls' hill), "*soussem*" (be quiet), and "*tharbaath*" (the team), which are sprinkled throughout the text. The inclusion of Kabyle words here attests to Duchêne's familiarity with the Berber language and confirms our brief reading of his two other novels regarding his inclusion of Arabic and Kabyle words: Duchêne simply reports words and bits of conversation faithfully, and he has his characters "speak" the language that is actually spoken under the particular circumstances and in the particular locations where they evolve (Arabic and French around tribunals, official places, and with administrators, and Kabyle in villages).

The three novels discussed here demonstrate Duchêne's familiarity with Kabyle customs and also probably with Adolphe Hanoteau and Aristide Letourneux's famous 1872 study on this very topic, *La kabylie et les coutumes kabyles*. *Le Berger d'Akfadou* and *Au pied des monts éternels* address the difficulties associated with any attempt to change Kabyle customs and communal laws; in both novels such an attempt leads to tragedy and failure. By contrast, *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss* has a happy ending, for it tells the story of a young couple who, just like Cassard in Randau's novel, strip themselves of their indigenous ways and mentality and wholeheartedly embrace French values. *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss* shows us the way toward progress and civilization through Safia and Arezki's success story, while *Le Berger d'Akfadou* and *Au pied des monts éternels* point to the deplorable aspects of Kabyle customs that sorely need to be changed. The didactic impulse of his novels clouds Duchêne's claim that he has scrupulously described the Kabyle people, for the colonizer's lens, through which the French colonial administrator Duchêne sees the world, necessarily distorts the situations and events he describes in the text. Moreover, the social window through which he accessed Kabyle reality is also far too narrow to allow a genuine representation of Kabyle traditions and practices of the time. Finally, despite the author's familiarity with the topic and the region, Duchêne's novels cannot be read as sociological documents about the Kabyles as he entreats the reader to do throughout the paratext.

Algerianists often used the terms Kabyle, Moorish, and Arab indiscriminately, which suggests confusion, ignorance, or indifference regarding the different languages and cultures of Algeria, though this did not prevent the writers from occasionally comparing and opposing them to buttress their

own agenda. Another purpose in using the terms Berber and Kabyle was to provide a folkloric appeal to texts that also claim a specific knowledge and expertise, in order to cater to a neophyte readership (especially in France, where many of these novels were published) or to simply wink at the Algerian readership and so create a sense of complicity about a world they share and know well.

The Algerianist movement faded away by the Second World War, and another literary movement based in Algiers, the École d'Alger, emerged in the 1930s. Named by Gabriel Audisio, it consisted of writers such as Albert Camus (*Noces*, *L'étranger*, and *L'été*), Gabriel Audisio (*Jeunesse de la méditerranée* and *Le sel de la mer*), and Emmanuel Roblès (*L'action*, *La vallée du paradis*, *Travail d'homme*, and *Les hauteurs de la ville*), who gathered around Edmond Charlot, the founder of Editions Charlot, which published Camus' first works. This movement opposed the exclusive and narrow vision of Algerian identity espoused by the Algerianists and the colonial discourse of the time. The focus shifted toward a notion of Mediterranean culture and identity, which was construed as transnational, inclusive, and nonconfrontational. While the Algerianists were concerned with the settler's hardships in the new land, writers from the École d'Alger turned toward a myth of the Mediterranean, grounded in the sea, the sun, happiness, joie de vivre, physical beauty, and pleasure.[61] Audisio, the leading member of the École d'Alger, is the author of *Heliotrope*, the first major text where he outlines the main characteristics of what he called a "Mediterranean humanism." Audisio recognizes the past legacies of the region and its diversity, and declares:

> Je suis citoyen de la Méditerranée, à condition d'avoir pour concitoyens tous les peuples de la mer, y compris les juifs, les Arabes, les Berbères et les Noirs. Je me dévoue à l'humanisme méditerranéen, à condition qu'il tienne compte non seulement de l'ordre romain, du miracle grec et du christianisme, mais encore des apports civilisateurs de l'Egypte, de la Perse et de l'Orient phénicien, hébraïque et musulman.[62]
>
> (I am a citizen of the Mediterranean on the condition that my fellow citizens are all the peoples of the sea, including Jews, Arabs, Berbers, and black people. I devote myself to Mediterranean humanism on the condition that it takes into account not only the Roman order, the Greek miracle, and Christianity, but also the civilizing contributions of Egypt, Persia, and the Phoenician, Hebraic, and Muslim Orients.)

The manifesto of the École d'Alger was folded into Camus' address at the opening of the Maison de la Culture in Algiers in April 1937: "La culture indigène. La nouvelle culture méditérranéenne."[63] In 1947 the manifesto was redrafted in the third issue of the journal *Forge* and presented with French, Arabic, and Kabyle texts. The manifesto proclaims that the movement's mission is to create "strong ties of friendship, irrespective of the painful concerns of the present. . . . We hope that the most generous elements of Islamic thought, both past and present, will be linked, here in the Maghreb, to the noblest elements of French thought, both past and present."[64] This declaration demonstrates the inclusiveness and tolerance that characterized this new Mediterranean culture. Its supporters turned their backs on Latinity, whose notion of culture and identity is narrow, conservative, and racist, to embrace all the influences of the past and the present and collaborate in a new Mediterranean culture and "race"—"a blue race," as Audisio puts it.

This new vision of Algeria—lively, fraternal, and heterogeneous—is, however, to be consolidated with and by French culture.[65] And while Audisio claims his homeland to be the sea, France remains his nation.[66] We reach here the limits of the innovative vision of the École d'Alger, which, despite its modern way of thinking—entailing a call for greater democracy, justice, and equality—and most of all despite its critique of the colonial condition, still does not question the French colonial enterprise and refuses to revisit its past: Algeria is called to reimagine itself and start again with a clean slate, irrespective of the past and present French colonial domination over Algeria's Arab and Berber populations.

The humanist disposition of these writers prevented them from portraying indigenous characters or writing stories such as those produced by the Algerianists. Mouloud Feraoun called this posture "une honorable pudeur"—honorable decency.[67] First, their literary interests rested elsewhere, and they probably felt it an untenable position to write about or for the "indigenous." One recalls Emmanuel Roblès' reaction to Feraoun's suggestion that he write a Kabyle novel: Roblès asked Feraoun to get to work, for it was *his* voice they wanted to hear. Albert Camus rarely included indigenous characters in his novels, which troubled Feraoun, who wrote to Camus complaining about the total absence of Arabs in his novel *La peste*, set in Oran.[68] Still, it is in Roblès' novel *Les hauteurs de la ville*, published in 1948, that, for the first time in the corpus of writers of European descent, the protagonist is an indigenous character. In this novel the colonial confrontation is avoided and replaced by a sense of solidarity that transcends

racial division. The hero of the novel, Smaïl Ben Kakhdar, is a young, solitary man who is revolted by the injustice represented by a supporter of the Vichy regime, Almaro, a thief and criminal who makes money by luring poor and miserable men to enlist for the war in Europe. The novel unfolds to reveal Smaïl's hatred for Almaro and his obsessive desire to kill him. At the end of the novel, he finally murders Almaro and is caught by the police soon afterward. Roblès concentrates the plot and the hero's entire attention and life on the rejection of this injustice and the desire for revenge, so the cultural and familial background is neglected in favor of a political stance. The fact that Smaïl is not French is detectable only through his name, and although several details point to the fact that he is Kabyle (e.g., he claims that he could have stayed in Kabylia and become a teacher, and when he leaves Algiers for a secret mission, he tells his girlfriend, Monique, that he is going to Kabylia), this is never clearly stated and does not have any impact on the plot or on his life. Obviously Roblès does not provide Smaïl with a credible indigenous character, and besides his unexplained rage, Smaïl could be any poor European youth from Algeria.

The alternative to the Algerianists' narrow conception of identity that the École d'Alger provided was for the Arabs and Berbers to assimilate into the vast Mediterranean culture under the aegis of France. More importantly, some of these writers encouraged and supported the first indigenous writers, who benefited from their predecessors' literary works, if only to use them as an odd, warped mirror against which their Algeria would slowly appear.

Rehearsal for Dialogue: Algerian Fiction, between Imitation and Malaise

Despite the progress made in the acknowledgment, depiction, and treatment of the indigenous population, especially Kabyles, writers of European descent in Algeria were still caught up with the same myths, social and cultural exclusion, and stereotypes. Meanwhile, the indigenous writers whom I will now call Algerian picked up the pen not to "write back" just yet but rather to insinuate themselves into the exclusive cultural sphere defined by the French.[69]

These first Algerian writers were known as *les évolués*, and their work is often called *le roman indigène*. In Algeria, the literary production of these Arab and Berber writers started at the beginning of the twentieth century, with imitation of the European novel. Although the first text ever written

in French by an indigenous writer is Si M'Hamed Ben Rahal's 1891 short story "La vengeance du cheikh," scholars agree that the first novel by an indigenous writer is *Ahmed ben Mostapha, goumier* by Ben Cherif Mohammed Ben Si Ahmed, published in 1920. The author, a captain in the French army, declared that he wrote the novel "to extol the glory of a nation that awakened the chivalrous impulse of a slumbering people."[70] The Algerian novels of this period, such as Chukri Khodja's *Mamoun, L'ébauche d'un idéal*, published in 1928, were perceived by the French establishment as a confirmation of the benefits of colonization and evidence of the assimilation process.[71] Obviously, here assimilation was understood as a mere imitation of the French model, for the French literary establishment and the readership in Algeria and France were not interested in hearing the voice of colonized Algeria. And yet when indigenous writers imitated their European counterparts too well, they were disparaged and belittled just as they breached the wall of absolute (racial, religious, cultural) difference.

From the 1920s up to 1945, at least a dozen indigenous novelists emerged on the literary scene in Algeria. They include Saad Ben Ali, Ben Cherif Mohammed Ben Si Ahmed, Slimane Ben Ibrahim, Malek Bennabi, Abdelkader Hadj Hamou, Chukri Khodja, Mohammed Ould Cheikh, Aïssa Zehar, and Rabah Zenati. The corpus of literary work by these writers is considered the foundation of Algerian colonial-era fiction. These novels depict characters in ambiguous situations that often end in death or failure. In Chukri Khodja's *Mamoun, l'ébauche d'un idéal*, the hero fails to lead a French life and become French—for "to become more French is to become more human," declares preface writer Vital-Mareille[72]—and instead returns home to die, while in *In El-Euldj, captif des Barbaresques*, by the same author, a Christian converts to Islam but is tortured by his conscience, publicly renounces his acquired faith, and finally ends up mad. In *Myriem dans les Palmes* (1936) by Mohammed Ould Cheikh, Myriem and her brother Jean-Hafid are the children of a French father and an Algerian Muslim mother; each parent wants to convert the children to his or her respective faith. The father dies and the mother hopes to convince them to turn to her culture, but they have already been shaped by the father's education.

This early literature, from the early 1920s to 1945, had been largely ignored or dismissed until scholars such as Ahmed Lanasri and, more recently, Peter Dunwoodie studied the corpus closely.[73] They argued, for many reasons, that this corpus should be valued and included in the francophone canon.[74] This indigenous literature is different from that of the writers of European descent. The character of the settler or landowner is now absent

and is replaced by characters that belong to the colonized world, while the fiction is less critical of the colonized population; also, the deprecation of the Muslim world is more subdued, and in some instances Islam is even portrayed as a positive influence. Despite these innovations, the novels produced in this period continue to glorify the colonial system. The dominating themes are the positive aspects of Western civilization, the conqueror's justice, the loyalty of the colonized, and the chaos of precolonial times[75]; colonial discourse persists but is less prevalent.

Given that these writers were totally dependent upon the colonial editorial structures, never mind the colonial structure itself, displaying signs of allegiance to these editorial structures was a necessity in order to be published. One way of showing such allegiance was to seek help from a French mentor, who would write a preface, an introduction, or an *avant-propos*, which facilitated admittance into the French literary scene. This writing act functions as a stamp of approval that deems the work acceptable—domesticated—and gives it visibility. This precaution, insists Lanasri, was necessary, for Algerian writers felt like intruders in a universe that did not belong to them.[76] Indeed, in these paratextual spaces (preface, introduction, etc.), the novels are presented as examples of Algerian assimilation into French culture and civilization. They also reveal the influence that the mentor, "friend," or "protector" had over the publication and reception of the novel. An informative example appears in Dunwoodie's study: Sidi Mohammed Abdoun asks his "protector," Paul Leblanc de Prébois (sous-chef de Bureau de Prefecture in Constantine, Algeria), to write a preface for his Kabyle tale titled "L'aurore et la médaille d'argent." In the preface Prébois wrote, he details the conditions under which he agreed to preface the book: the administrator had the supplicant reflect upon six terms (including "colonization" and "French administration") and had the author report back, which he did, with answers to Prébois' satisfaction.[77]

Under these conditions, creating a counterdiscourse was a challenge. Seth Graebner argues, "The counterdiscourse proposed had to be extremely subtle, and inevitably participated in an array of contingent arguments and discursive compromise."[78] First the writers had to affirm their assimilation of Frenchness, their imitation (or mimicry) of the French, and their compliance with the colonial system, while at the same time inserting elements of dissent into their narratives. Dunwoodie speaks of a "double allegiance"

> lived out by the majority of évolué writers and the subsequent dialogic, hybridised nature of their fiction: allegiance to, and valorization

> of, an indigenous (Muslim) past which they were unwilling to sink under a blanket condemnation and a (European) modernity whose onslaught proclaimed the obsolescence of that past.[79]

Indeed, while this corpus does not contain a clear discourse of resistance—even the idea of an Algerian nation and related claims only emerged in the 1930s[80]—Lanasri and Dunwoodie uncovered subtle modes of subversion and aspects of resistance in the form of what Lanasri calls "ruptures"—that is to say, textual, intertextual, cultural, linguistic, ideological, and narrative discontinuities. For instance, in *Myriem dans les palmes*, Mohammed Ould Cheikh introduces an Algerian lexicon and includes in his narrative war songs from Tafilalet, a Berber region in Morocco; in *Zohra, la femme du mineur* by Hadj Hamou Abdelkader, the precolonial past is portrayed as a fraternal paradise, and alcoholism in the novel appears as the only gain so-called civilization brought to the colonized. Chukri Khodja, in *El-Euldj, captif des barbaresques*, contextualizes French colonial power through historical relativism by situating his novel in the sixteenth century, where a dignitary in Algiers takes a French Christian captive as his personal slave. In fact, Khodja, argues Graebner, makes sure that we read his historical novel as a parable of failed assimilation.[81] Even Ben Cherif's novel, *Ahmed ben Mostapha, goumier*, whose protagonist shows total support for the colonial order and fights Moroccan rebels, might contain elements of dissent: Graebner argues that this support of the colonial order can also be read as a response to hostile propaganda against indigenous veterans.[82]

Interesting characteristics emerge from this corpus. First there is the contradictory double discourse, a discourse that imitates the dominant power while at the same time undermining it. Yet, as Lanasri argues, the dialectic process remains unfinished, for the third term that would allow the discourse to go beyond the contradiction to reach a resolution is absent and therefore cannot be detected, but only inferred through interpretation.[83] Another characteristic of this corpus is the elite background of its writers and its focus on religion.[84] These writers came from wealthy and prominent families and, interestingly, viewed religion as the major distinguishing characteristic between them and the French. However, other characteristics ascribed by Dunwoodie and Lanasri to this generation of writers, such as being at the origin of a double movement of "resistance-dialogue" and being "in-between" men, apply more to the next generation of writers. In fact, because of the pressures they faced from the colonial authorities and the literary establishment, these writers did not have the freedom, the means, or maybe even the will to create the literary movement of "resistance and

dialogue" that Lanasri describes.[85] Moreover, because resistance is barely detectable in the texts and sometimes hinges on acrobatic interpretation, this body of texts cannot be construed as an antagonistic one that poses any meaningful response to the dominant discourse.

The literary production of this period is essentially focused on the relationship between France and its colonial subjects and does not consider the Arab–Berber relationship. The topic was, however, addressed by the Algerian intelligentsia of the time. Kabyle lawyer Augustin-Belkacem Ibazizen declared that the Kabyle is different from the Arab in that he does not worship his historical past (which he would oppose to French history), and Ibazizen advocated total *francisation* for the Kabyles. Ibazizen belonged to what historian Guy Pervillé calls "pro-colonial Berberism" or "assimilationist Berberism," with which he also associates Si Amar Boulifa, a Kabyle teacher who praised France for having brought Kabylia out of the Turkish yoke and out of ignorance.[86] Boulifa, who did not mention his Arab compatriot, anticipated the persistence of Berber identity, which he dreamed of seeing flourish under French sovereignty.

However, "Muslim Arab-Berberism" was an orientation that was more common at the time.[87] For instance, future nationalist leader Ferhat Abbas pointed to the failure of the Roman colonization of the region and then the success of Islamization in Algeria.[88] He would later underline the Berbers' fierce resistance to all foreign colonizers except the Muslim Arabs, who conquered the Berbers' soul. Cheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis, who founded the Association des Oulémas musulmans algériens, whose objective was to affirm the "Arab and Muslim" personality of Algeria and preserve its religious and cultural values, also underlined the indissoluble union between Arabs and Berbers. Historians Mubarak El Mili and Tawfik el Madani, members of Ben Badis' association, also highlighted the fusion of Arabs and Berbers and called attention to the Oriental and Semitic origin of the Berbers.[89] In this fusion process, however, the Berbers have totally dissolved and have been incorporated into the unique "Arab and Muslim" identity, as Cheikh Ben Badis' famous song "Le peuple algérien est musulman, sa généalogie est arabe" ("The Algerian people are Muslim and their genealogy is Arab") reminds us.

The Emergence of Berber Consciousness and the Origin of the First Berber Writers

The emergence of Berber consciousness as we know it today only came about after France's defeat by the Germans in 1940. The French defeat had a

major impact on the French colonies, where the colonized populations now had evidence of the colonial power's weaknesses and deficiencies. Intellectuals and writers in Algeria were now able to assert themselves as never before. The Atlantic Charter signed in 1941 by Churchill and Roosevelt was another significant factor in the emergence of Algerian consciousness, for the document declared the freedom of all people and the right to self-determination. Moreover, the Sétif massacre in 1945 violently shook the dreams of indigenous intellectuals and évolués who believed that Algeria's future lay with some form of assimilation.[90] The fact that many Algerian soldiers were recruited to fight in both World Wars and experienced for themselves the limits of French civilization led to their questioning the colonial system. In addition to all these events, which were significant to all Algerians, others that were particularly significant to the Berbers took place and precipitated the awakening of a popular Berber consciousness.

The first major event correlated with the emergence of a popular Berber consciousness was political and took place in 1948–49; it is usually called the Berberist crisis. To capture the importance of this crisis, which unfolded in France among the Algerian immigrant community, it is necessary to pause and look back at the role of the Kabyle immigration to France, a movement of people dating back to the late nineteenth century.

The poetry of Si Mohand ou-Mhand is probably the first literary testimony to the Kabyle experience of exile of men who would either travel from Kabylia to faraway cities or to foreign lands, especially France, in search of work. The 1871 insurrection in Kabylia, the most serious insurrection against the French since the time of Abd-el-Kader, also left its mark on the Kabyles. The insurrection was brutally repressed, and Kabyles saw much of their land confiscated. Si Muhand U Mhend lost everything in the repression—family, home, and land—and became a wandering bard. His poetry testifies to the colonial conquest's impact on people's lives and to exile, a condition almost ancillary to the conquest. Thus, he writes:

Hatiten akw di Leblida	Our youth is all there, in Blida
Tarrawt l-lgherba	The children of exile
Di zznaqi la tthewwisen[91]	Wandering aimlessly in the streets

And again we find similar sentiments in the following passage:

Nfigh d gher tmurt l-lgherba	I was an exile in a foreign country
M'a atrum a ttelba,	Won't you cry for me, devout men
Laaqul isenteqqiden[92]	You who comprehend all things

The experience of exile brings forth the question of the relationship to the

other and, by extension, to oneself. Poverty and the failed insurrection, with its repercussions, led the Kabyles to become exiles and to live in propinquity with the other: the French in France, and the Kabyles' compatriots from other regions of Algeria. The poetry of Si Mohand ou-Mhand might be the first testimony to this feeling of foreignness—which is intrinsic to the modern Berber experience—and thus of one's own existence as separate from others. But if one excludes the transcription of oral literature, such as that of Si Mohand ou-Mhand, one has to wait for the Berber francophone writers, novelists, and poets to better grasp the Berber world experience and consciousness.

By and large, the Berber-speaking population comprised the first emigration from North Africa to France and Europe. Men came from Kabylia and later the Aurès, and then from the Moroccan Souss, followed by the Rif.[93] Kabyle workers who dominated Algerian emigration to France until the 1940s were soon introduced to political activity and trade unionism, which was at its apogee in the 1930s; the French Communist Party also influenced some of the Kabyles.[94] These influences sensitized the workers to a discourse of freedom and social justice. Emigration was thus a decisive factor in the development of Algerian nationalism from 1920–62 and, to a certain extent, in the affirmation of Berber politics and culture.

Moreover, it was also in exile that the radical organizations of Algerian nationalism were born, with a strong Berber presence in the executive branch, as well as among the militants. In 1924 in Paris, Algerian émigrés, who were mostly Kabyles, created Le Congrès des ouvriers nord-africains de la région parisienne. In 1926 the group was renamed L'Étoile nord-africaine (ENA), which even at this early date already demanded independence for North Africa and also emphasized social progress. Five of the eight founders were Kabyles, and the vast majority of the militants were Kabyles, too; Roger Letourneau commented that the organization should just have been called L'Étoile algérienne or even L'Étoile Kabyle.[95] The Kabyle-educated elite came from modest and rural origins and had some insight into the suffering of the working-class Algerian immigrant population in France. Also, their sympathy for and understanding of the rural population and its problems (poverty, emigration) soon turned a part of this elite into radical nationalist militants, revolted by French injustice and thus rejecting the principle of French sovereignty.[96]

To return to the Berberist crisis, one could say the crisis brought to the fore the first divergence concerning Algeria's identity within the Algerian nationalist movement. The crisis itself is straightforward. In 1948 Rachid Ali Yahia, president of the French Federation of the PPA-MTLD (Parti du

Peuple Algérien, Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques), presented a motion to use the phrase "Algerian Algeria" (Algérie algérienne), instead of "Arab Algeria" (L'Algérie arabe), which was used by the directorate.[97] A large majority approved the motion: out of thirty-two members, twenty-eight rejected the idea of an Algeria that is Arab and Muslim and agreed on the phrase "Algerian Algeria." The party's directorate reacted violently by purging it of its radical elements and denounced what they viewed as a Berberist plot, manipulated by colonialism.[98] Following these events, any mention of the Berber dimension of Algeria in the nationalist movement was considered dangerous, if not a taboo. As Hocine Aït Ahmed, the head of the Organisation Spéciale (OS), declares in his memoirs, "from that moment on Kabylia would not be able to shake the specter of Berberism with all its irrational, negative and ironic connotations" ("A partir de cet épisode, la Kabylie traînera . . . la casserole du "berbérisme" avec toutes les connotations irrationnelles, négatives, et ironiques, attachées à la fonction d'épouvantail").[99] Aït Ahmed, a Kabyle from the same village as Rachid Ali Yahia, also recounts his strong disagreement with the latter. He called the crisis "a political catastrophe," and was convinced that the party and Algerian society at large were not ready for such a debate.[100] Still, Aït Ahmed, despite his vocal disagreement with Rachid Ali Yahia and the fact that he never made any linguistic or cultural Berber claims, was accused of being a Berberist and was replaced as the head of the OS by Ben Bella, an advocate of pan-Arabism.[101]

In Algeria the backlash that followed the Berberist crisis—or the "anti-Berber crisis," as Amar Ouerdane called it—was also significant, since almost all the Kabyle executives were arrested by the French authorities.[102] A propaganda campaign also called for the exclusion from the party of all the executives incarcerated, brandishing the old cliché that Kabyles equaled French missionaries.[103]

This crisis, paradoxically and despite the taboo associated with the Kabyle question, made the Kabyles more aware of their political and linguistic difference, a realization that is a landmark in the coming of age of Berber consciousness. While the pioneers of the political Berber consciousness emerged in Algeria (Ouali Benaï, Ali Laïmèche), it is important to note that in France, the influence of French society on young intellectuals—who were cut off from religious customs and familial traditions and who came of age in a secular society—also played a role.[104] In addition to the influence of French society, one simply has to consider the mingling of the Algerian population that took place in France, where political, linguistic, and even cultural differences within the immigrant population became noticeable.

In contrast, Kabyles in Algeria were less attentive to the differences between Kabyles and Arabs simply because of the former's relative geographical isolation and because the latter were considered part of the familiar other: Kabyles merely knew that outside Kabylia there were Arab speakers who were indigenous people like them. This familiarity derived from the fact that until the First World War, Kabyles had felt they belonged to the Islamic community. In Kabyle villages, the Arabic language had a specific place and role and was fully integrated into people's lives. Arabic belonged to the religious realm and to primary schools, located in the village mosque, where religious instruction took place. In "Aux sources de la créativité des années cinquante," sociologist Fanny Colonna mentions the scholars and saints who were educated in these schools, scholars who would travel to the Orient and who provided a link with the external world. Colonna condemns Western, and especially French, ignorance and its contempt for Arab civilization, which had the effect of severing the link that these individuals had provided between Kabylia and the external world.[105] Indeed, with the French presence, such traveling became impossible.

While Arabs or Arab speakers were not construed as true others by the Kabyles, the French were. The French were the Other—the unfamiliar and dominant Other, as opposed to the familiar one, the integrated other. And it was in opposition to the French Other that Berber consciousness developed. Otherness had always been an intrinsic part of the Berber experience; however, the specificity of the colonial presence with the imposition of French culture and civilization—along with the attempt to "Frenchify" the "natives"[106]—generated a resistance based on Kabyles' renewed interest in the Berber past, which crystallized in a new claim for the value of Berber culture.

Kabylia's geographical isolation did not thwart the creation of French schools, which had a significant impact on the self-awareness of the Kabyles. The decisions to build these schools in the quantity that they were built and the interest of the French government in this region have been discussed at length by many scholars, including Salem Chaker, Fanny Colonna, Patricia Lorcin, Karima Dirèche, and Ouahmi Ould-Braham. Indeed, early on, numerous French schools were built in the Kabyle region, and this fact alone has been the subject of passionate debates in which the Kabyle Myth was revived. Again, as discussed earlier, at the origin of the Kabyle Myth were the observations of French scholars or travelers who had gone to Algeria before, during, and after the conquest of Kabylia in 1870 and had noticed differences between Kabyles and Arabs. In their majority, Kabyles lived in or around mountainous regions, were settled people, spoke

a different language, looked different, had different customs and political organization, and of most importance, their practice of Islam was deemed more moderate. During the nineteenth century in France, many theories about race, languages, progress, and civilization were formulated and used to justify the French presence in North Africa, based on the racial, intellectual, and political superiority of the French and French civilization.

However, there was a specific desire to assimilate the Kabyle population, which first came about through emigration and coincided with the opening of the first schools in Kabylia in 1873.[107] And indeed, the only sphere in which a French influence—not policy, but influence—can be seen in Kabylia is in education, for by the end of the nineteenth century, a small intellectual elite with a Western education emerged. This influence, however, was not a program but, as Salem Chaker affirms, the result of a historical situation. He adds that the only concrete policy of the French toward the Berbers in Kabylia was the repression and destruction linked to the numerous insurrections of the Berber regions (Kabylia, Aurès, Rif).[108] In fact, the establishment of schools in Kabylia was always more complex than it seemed at first. For instance, Fanny Colonna discusses the establishment of a French school in the villages of Benni Yenni in 1881 and the diverse reasons for this choice. These villages were selected by Emile Masqueray, who knew the region well, and he chose them because of the region's involvement in the revolt of 1871.[109] The choices were also strategic, as the tribe had distanced itself from the work of the land and had instead maintained a strong economy based on goldsmith and gunsmith work.[110]

The main objective of French education was to acculturate the native and create a workforce for the settlers' needs and for emigration. Another objective of French schooling was to moralize and civilize, contrary to the mere trade-oriented education requested by the settlers. However, early on, the colonial administration felt the need for an indigenous elite that would serve as a link between the colonial system and the dominated society. In her study on the recruitment and training of indigenous teachers, Fanny Colonna shows how powerful the impact of the training at the *cours normal* (a type of school that trained elementary teachers) was for students, the goal of which was to profoundly modify the moral values, way of life, and ethos of the conquered society.[111] Programs were carefully designed by the French colonizer with the objective of detaching the students from their cultural background without totally assimilating them into the dominant colonial society. While Colonna draws a distinction between the students who attended the *cours normal* and those who attended the *lycée* or *medersa*, stressing the uniformization of the *cours normal*, French

education in general transformed the attending students but not always in the way they were expected to transform. It is undeniable that the elite who emerged from these schools brought changes to their social and cultural environment through their professions—and, as Feraoun's works illustrate, they were often the center of attention within their communities; still, their relative integration does not mean that this elite was totally subjugated and served at the beck and call of the colonial system. Often these teachers and intellectuals developed different means of resistance and a voice of their own through their cultural production.

Among the new developments of the period discussed here, one should note the important development of the popular song, which will also contribute to the realization of a certain Berber cultural specificity. In Kabyle village life, there has always been a rich tradition of vocal music, despite the absence of original Kabyle musical instruments. In *Chants Kabyles de la guerre d'indépendance*, Mehenna Mahfoufi discusses the practice of song and its role in traditional Kabyle society (e.g., in rituals, lullabies, and mystical and religious situations) and the radical change it underwent after the introduction of foreign musical instruments and the concept of the soloist. Mahfoufi notes that the first foreign musical instruments (e.g., the banjo and *derbouka*) were introduced by the first émigrés returning from France after the Second World War. In fact, the singer and poet Slimane Azem embodied this change.[112] He was different from other singers in that he was a poet and a fabulist as well, and he soon became the voice of Kabyle exile. In addition, there was also the creation of the Kabyle radio station in 1938, which competed with traditional songs and musical forms. Radios, writes Zahir Ihaddaden, "were installed in cafés and listening to the radio became a collective event."[113] In the 1950s, singers composed militant songs attacking the colonial power in Algeria. Here again, Slimane Azem, among others, such as Oukil Amar and Belaïd, emerges as the father of the political song.

In the end it is not surprising that this particular social and political climate (the relative isolation of the region, the Berberist crisis, the role of immigration, the impact of French schooling, the evolution of the song, and the creation of a Kabyle radio station) led the Kabyles to turn inward to rely on themselves and develop their own cultural heritage. As a consequence, the cultural production that emerged during this period embodied these changes and hopes and contributed to the birth of Berber consciousness as well as the development of Algerian nationalism. This period should be called the dawn of Berber consciousness.

2

The First Berber Francophone Writers

The Dialectics of Identity

From the 1940s through the early 1960s, many Algerian authors emerged on the literary scene with either a single novel or testimonials of one form or another.[1] One author, Abdelkader Oulhaci, published three novels, and Djamila Debèche, one of the first two Algerian women writers (the other is Taos Amrouche), published *Leila jeune fille d'Algérie* in 1947 and *Aziza* in 1955.[2] This chapter is dedicated to the first Berber writers—that is, those writers who declared themselves to be Berbers—and to a literary corpus that does not include the texts mentioned earlier or the work of two major writers of the time, Kateb Yacine and Mohammed Dib. Moreover, Assia Djebar and Malek Haddad, two other major figures of this period, are not included in this chapter. Although they are both technically of Berber origin—as is Kateb Yacine[3]—they did not identify as such, nor did they cite any Berber influence in their work.[4]

The Berber writers discussed in this chapter are Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche, Marie-Louise Taos Amrouche, Mouloud Feraoun, Mouloud Mammeri, and Malek Ouary. Their work, considered as a group of texts (and writers), represents a clear break from the previous generation of Algerian writers and from their contemporary Algerian compatriots. This rupture is not based on any essentialist difference but rather on a series of contingencies that set these writers apart: they received the same French education and shared the same geographical, cultural, and social background. Unlike their predecessors, however, these writers did not come from influential, wealthy families and had no connection to the army or to the military establishment, with the exception of Mouloud Mammeri, who was from a well-to-do family.[5] Also unlike the previous generation, these writers do not focus on religion, although faith is not entirely absent from their work. The subject is of interest, however, given that some (Malek Ouary and the

Amrouches) belong to Christian families, while the others are Muslim. Finally, these writers all come from the same rural region of Algeria, namely, Kabylia, and claim their attachment to their Berber culture, which they felt was vanishing. This fear of loss led them to have dual foci, one dedicated to their literary project—not unrelated to their Berber claims—and the other devoted to the revival of the Berber language and culture.

Simply put, this is the first group of writers who saw themselves as Berbers. Interestingly, this moment of self-recognition came about through a foreign or second language: French. This process required an odd mirror—namely, the gaze of the French Other. To better understand why the gaze of the Other is such an integral part of Berber creation, one should turn to the literary history of the Berbers. There has always been a rich oral tradition of Berber narrative (tales, legends, and poetry) that touches all aspects of life (love, religion, history, even the colonial conquest). Poetry plays a major role, the importance of which the leadership of the French colonial army realized as early as 1857, when local poets were forced to compose poems about French domination and glory.[6] Even the transcription and publication of the first Kabyle poems, in 1867, were the work of a French military officer, General Hanoteau.[7] That the first volume of Kabyle poetry was published by a French general who also brutally repressed the Berber people is another unsettling aspect of Kabyle history. One must look ahead twenty more years to see Belkacem Ben Sedira's inclusion of a few poems and songs in his Kabyle language lesson plan, followed by the works of L. Rinn and Luciani, and finally the voluminous and probably richest publication of Kabyle poetry, published in 1904, by Saïd Boulifa, a Kabyle schoolteacher.

It is paramount that some of these first publications were produced by the French and that they became available to the first local elites who received a Western education. Before these first publications, there were a few religious texts, lost today, written in Berber with Arabic characters, including the Koran of the Barghawata.[8] Other texts were mainly adaptations of Arabic works. It is not that Berbers did not write, but they wrote in languages other than their own. This has made earlier literary production by Berbers difficult to identify, for Berbers long used other languages for literary expression and did not necessarily identify themselves as Berbers. Berber writers, poets, and historians wrote in Greek, Latin, and Arabic, the languages of the successive invaders. Thus, the impulse to write in Berber, as well as the interest in Berber matters, came in part from the outside. European scholars produced a whole corpus of work on Berber history, language, and ethnography; after the francophone Berber elite came to possess

those texts, the understanding that they had of themselves changed profoundly. Berber linguist Salem Chaker declares:

> [Le berbérophone] découvre brutalement que l'arabité et l'islamité du Maghreb sont des données historiques, relativement tardives, qu'il existe une histoire pré-islamique berbère de son pays, que sa langue peut être considérée comme la seule langue autochtone du Maghreb . . . qu'elle a, depuis la plus haute antiquité, son alphabet propre. . . . Avant la colonisation, l'intellectuel Kabyle se référait à des groupes tribaux, à des valeurs sociales, à des saints . . . ; après, il se réfère à la langue, à l'histoire ancienne et à la berbérité du Maghreb.[9]
>
> ([The Berber speaker] brutally discovers that Maghreb's "*arabité*" and "*Islamité*" are part of historical events that happened relatively late, that there exists a Berber pre-Islamic history of his country, that his language can be considered the only indigenous language of the Maghreb . . . that it has, since the late antiquity, its own alphabet. . . . Before the colonization, the Kabyle intellectual used to refer to tribal groups, to social values, to saints . . . ; after the colonization, he referred to the language, to ancient history, and to the Berberness of the Maghreb.)

The pioneers of Berber literature were, finally, all products of the French school, and many, such as Saïd Boulifa, were professors or schoolteachers. These early intellectuals were often critical of their European predecessors, who were judgmental and contemptuous about their object of study. For instance, in Henri Basset's study of Berber literature, he asserts, "The Berbers . . . do not possess a great imagination. . . . The Berber hero is not a happy man, in a civilized and polished world . . . he is a brutal man, good or bad depending on the circumstances. . . . Adventures aside, is this hero very far from some of these Berber chiefs who are fighting us today in Morocco, people of nothing sometimes, but whose guile and courage, as well as their *baraka*, propel them to the foreground?"[10]

Still, these predecessors provided material that laid the groundwork—early resonances of which are found in the work of the poet Si Mohand ou-Mhand—for a new Berber consciousness.[11] Berber intellectuals absorbed the colonial French outsider's view of themselves from these earlier works, where they were the object of scrutiny, and then worked to oppose or correct that view. Hence, the gaze of the Other reflected in the eyes of the object of study produced two movements: coming into existence with respect to the Other and then resistance to this very same "generative" gaze.

That resistance produced a new Kabyle consciousness. It is therefore not surprising that the works of these writers often focused, in an attempt to provide an alternative discourse to the one with which they were familiar, on representation. The French reader (for these texts were first aimed at a European readership, since the writers' compatriots were mostly illiterate) plays the role of the mirror, and the creation of the self, as elaborated in Jacques Lacan's work, is always constructed in a dialectical exchange with the other/Other. Here, the French play the part of the Other. The result is the production of very personal, even autobiographical texts. Obviously, the desire to testify also exists because there is an other/Other, an interlocutor (namely, the French colonizer), hence the emergence of dialogue.

And so it can be argued that, unlike their predecessors discussed in the previous chapter, these writers were the first generation of Algerian writers truly in dialogue with the colonial world. They questioned themselves and the world that surrounded them in different ways, and often the themes of their fiction are based on their everyday experience, which these writers tried to represent as faithfully as possible. This shift in content is due to the dialogue these writers established between themselves and the colonizers. Feraoun's essay "La littérature algérienne" signals the desire for Algerian writers like himself to testify, to confess, in response to the confession of their French counterparts and in the hope of a forthcoming peaceful resolution. He declares:

> Ainsi ce refus délibéré de témoigner en notre faveur, qui peut paraître de prime abord décevant et immérité, trouve sa justification dans une honorable pudeur beaucoup plus que dans une prudente réserve. En tout cas, il a fait naître des vocations en nous encourageant à témoigner à notre tour et pour notre compte. Tout s'est passé comme si les écrivains d'origine européenne nous avaient conviés à une confession sans réticence, après nous avoir fait entendre la leur, afin que cet assaut de franchise fût l'éclatante affirmation d'une fraternité indestructible qu'il suffirait ensuite de traduire loyalement dans les faits. Et c'était là, notre espoir.[12]
>
> (Thus this deliberate refusal to testify on our behalf, which might seem at first disappointing and undeserved, finds its justification in an honorable decency rather than in a cautious reserve. In any case, it created vocations among us, encouraging us to testify in our turn and for ourselves. All happened as if the writers of European origin had invited us for an open confession after they had us hear theirs, so that this surge of honesty is the brilliant affirmation of an indestructible

fraternity that would only need to be loyally translated into facts. And there was our hope.)

Thus, the fiction of these writers is more personal than their Algerian predecessors' was, and more reflective and engaged, too. While the discourse of the preceding generation was viewed as the "unspoken," these writers uttered the word (*prendre la parole*) and occupied a position of "in-betweenness."[13] Moreover, the clash of civilization mentioned by Lanasri as a feature of the earlier Algerian novel is, in its interactive dimension, less a trait of the early novels he examined than in the corpus chosen here.[14] Earlier Algerian novels often tackle interfaith and intercultural marriages and relationships, a literary move that suggests a previous coexistence and intimate relationships with the Other, while the Berber writers described the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized as a novelty.

Berber writers were new to the literary scene and were viewed, along with their Arab counterparts, as a generation of writers in "exile," as Malek Haddad put it. Later, the term "52 Generation" was used by critics Jean Déjeux, Albert Memmi, and Charles Bonn to refer to a group of writers that included Mouloud Feraoun, Mouloud Mammeri, and Mohammed Dib. The year 1952 corresponds to the publication date of Mammeri's *La colline oubliée* and Dib's *La grande maison*, which, together with Feraoun's *Le fils du pauvre*, launched the Algerian novel. This generation was sometimes renamed "54 Generation" in reference to the beginning of the Algerian War of Independence. Algerian intellectuals in general were called by the French *les* évolués, *les assimilés*, *les hybrides*, and even *les mutants*, expressions that refer to French-educated Algerians, among whom were our Berber writers, profoundly attached to their Berber identity and culture.[15] These terms evoke either an odd transformation (*mutant*) or an awkward enough intermediary position to necessitate the literary establishment's creation of a new classification for these writers. The Berber writers distinguished themselves by also being men and women of the "frontier" (Liauzu) who linked one world to the other—that of the colonizer and that of the colonized. Steeped in two cultures and civilizations, these writers were able to launch the dialogue that was missing between the different communities that lived side by side in Algeria and that had no real interest in one another.[16]

The Amrouches, Feraoun, Mammeri, and Ouary grappled with the fictional contract (for lack of a better word) in the sense that they were engaged in a process of creation (despite all the hesitations of Feraoun, for example)

and struggled to articulate something that did not yet exist—namely, their own voice. This new exercise, personal and intimate, was coupled with and inseparable from a more community-oriented objective. Indeed, these writers felt the need to confront the colonial discourse on the colonized in order to rectify it while claiming their existence, their humanness. As a consequence, the literary production of this elite was often autobiographically oriented—or at least very personal—and at the same time mobilized by a desire to present or represent the Berbers more adequately. However, often only the latter point was acknowledged, and the novels were read as mere depictions of Berber daily lives, which led critics to label them ethnographic novels. Feraoun and Mammeri's novels are still considered "paradigmatic ethnographic novel[s]."[17] Thomas Lyons argues that "the ethnographic novel was a form of expression equivalent in some sense to the social and political writing that was denied to native Algerians under colonialism."[18] However, when these writers were inclined to write strictly political pamphlets or other essays, they did so (e.g., articles by Mammeri or Jean Amrouche), like some of their compatriots of the time. Indeed, during the period that concerns us here, an increasing number of Algerian intellectuals, such as Larbi Bouhali, Sadek Hadjeres, Ferhat Abbas, Messali Hadj, Malek Bennabi, and Mohammed-Chérif Sahli, were articulate and vocal about their political thoughts and views. If the Amrouches, Feraoun, Mammeri, and Ouary decided to write poetry and novels, it was because they wanted to write more than just political statements or ethnographic documents. I argue that (re)presenting one's culture and compatriots is a means for these writers to explore their respective subjectivities and Berber identities, as well as their literary voice, all of which is always enmeshed with that of the group. Let us not forget that all the writers discussed here were also engaged in a reappropriation and preservation of their Berber patrimony and steadfastly claimed their linguistic and regional specificity, an effort that could be construed as these writers' contribution to their struggle for their people and heritage. Thus, the literary enterprise conveys another set of concerns too often neglected, notably the interlocked questions of the relationship between oneself and the other, one's place in the world, and writing and creativity. Of course, these questions do not preclude a text from being engaged or politically significant.

These first francophone Berber writers, in dialogue with France (and sometimes with their French inner selves) and with their Berber identity (a fundamental otherness grounded in the lived experience of oral cultural and simple communal life), created a tradition of Berber francophone

literature that demonstrates the hypothesis put forth in the previous chapter: that at the core of the Berber experience lies an inner tension that often develops into a split, or *dédoublement*, in addition to the presence of the non-Berber Other. The integration of the Other's values and culture renders the confrontation with the Other neither totally foreign nor totally familiar, a situation that entails a dialectical mode of interaction.

Addressing these major francophone writers in a few pages obviously cannot do justice to their rich and considerable literary oeuvre. The aim here is less to analyze and dissect the production of these writers than to briefly sketch this first generation of Berber authors and reveal the threads that hold them together. These threads are their intellectual, cultural, and social background; their roles as men/women of dialogue; the fundamental role of the Other, often the French Other, in the process of finding a voice for themselves and their community while realizing the loss of a fundamental unity; and their twofold interest in literature and resistance through the recovery of their Berber culture, which they all believed was on the brink of extinction.

Francophone Berber Writers: Starting the Dialogue

> Je nourrissais le secret espoir de faire écrire à Emmanuel Roblès un roman kabyle, un de ces livres solides et têtus où nous apparaîtrions sous notre vrai jour, et cela lui eût été possible tant il s'intégrait si naturellement au pays, tant il s'y sentait incorporé. La première fois que je lui en parlai, il me regarda en plissant les yeux et m'écouta narquoisement. "Tu ne comprends donc pas que c'est là ton boulot? me dit-il. C'est ta voix que nous voulons entendre. Au travail!"[19]
>
> (I was secretly hoping to get Emmanuel Roblès to write a Kabyle novel, one of those solid, stubborn books in which we would appear as we really are, and he would have been able to do it since he fit so naturally into the country, since he felt so much a part of it. The first time I said anything to him about it, he looked at me and screwed up his eyes and listened mockingly. "Don't you understand that it's your job? It's your voice we want to hear. Get to work!")
>
> C'est un autre qui parle à ma place, ce traducteur en moi vivant comme un double intérieur toujours présent, et qui me dicte des mots et des phrases d'emprunt . . .—Jean Amrouche

(It is another who speaks in my place; this translator in me lives like an inner double, always present, dictating borrowed words and sentences . . .)

The Berber literary corpus considered here spans the years 1934—the year *Cendres*, Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche's first collection of poetry, was published—to 1962, the year of Algerian independence. I first consider Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche and Marie-Louise Taos Amrouche, who, because of their family's early Christian conversion and subsequent exile to Tunisia, were the first francophone Berber writers to explore themes of exile, alienation, and the relationship to the Other in their literary works. While Jean El Mouhoub chose poetry to explore his "soul" and its "*mal secret*" (secret illness) and express the tragedy and pain associated with the loss of "*l'esprit d'enfance*" (spirit of childhood), his sister Marie-Louise Taos opted for prose to address the existential pain she felt, which derived from her feelings of inadequacy, the admission of which was a feat for the first francophone Algerian woman novelist.[20] Another major literary figure discussed here is Mouloud Feraoun, considered the father of the Algerian novel. His first novel, *Le fils du pauvre*, offers a singular introduction to the autobiographical narrative: the novel opens with the Other's (the French) vision and perception of the narrator's world. Feraoun's novel prompted much debate about fiction and political engagement, the use of the French language and his intended readership, and the accuracy of the depiction of Kabylia in the novel, and some of these questions continue to be debated today.

Another key figure too briefly discussed here is the Berber linguist, anthropologist, and writer Mouloud Mammeri, who was a major Algerian intellectual before and after independence and remained so until his untimely death in 1989. His first novel, *La colline oubliée*, published in 1952, sparked intense debate after it received positive reviews from the French press. In it, Mammeri portrays the major upheavals that World War II brings to a small Berber village. The so-called French war ends an era and signifies the loss of the characters' world as they know it. In his next novel, *Le sommeil du juste*, published in 1955, Mammeri directly questions the French colonial presence in Algeria through the portrayal of Arezki, the French-educated Berber protagonist who rejects Berber values and traditions only to realize that the Western values he embraces are but illusions.

Finally, in 1956 journalist and writer Malek Ouary published his first novel, *Le grain dans la meule*, set before the colonial conquest. The narrative also grapples with otherness, only this time it originates from within and threatens to cause a family tragedy until an original resolution is found.

Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche

Among the writers discussed here, Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche and Marie-Louise Taos Amrouche are exceptional for at least two reasons. First, their family left Kabylia for Tunisia in 1908, an experience of exile that was deeply felt by all the members of the family, though with differing outcomes. Their early exile, like that of the poet Si Mohand ou-Mhand, brought about a feeling of severance from their country of origin and a desire to salvage their cultural heritage, which they felt was disappearing—hence, Taos' and Jean Amrouche's careers in Berber literature and culture.

Initially, it was Fadhma Aïth Mensour Amrouche, Taos and Jean's mother, who felt the weight of exile in Tunisia and expressed her loneliness in song and prose. In her autobiography, *Histoire de ma vie*, written in 1946 and first published in 1968, she declares,

> Jamais, malgré les quarante ans que j'ai passés en Tunisie, malgré mon instruction foncièrement française, jamais je n'ai pu me lier intimement ni avec des français, ni avec des arabes. Je suis restée, toujours, l'éternelle exilée, celle qui, jamais, ne s'est sentie chez elle nulle part.[21]
>
> (Despite the forty years I have spent in Tunisia, despite my basically French education, never have I been able to become a close friend of any French people, nor of Arabs. I remain forever the eternal exile, the woman who has never felt at home anywhere.)[22]

To alleviate the distress of exile and her feeling of inadequacy, Fadhma Amrouche sang Kabyle traditional songs for herself and her children, deeply influencing both Taos and Jean. At least in an archival sense, the family's contribution to francophone literature (Fadhma's autobiographical narrative; Jean's poems, articles, and essays; and Taos' novels) is immense, as is their role in the recognition and development of Berber culture with their transcription and translation of traditional Kabyle oral poetry and performance of Kabyle songs.

Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche is known as the first indigenous francophone poet from Algeria.[23] Born in 1906 in Kabylia to a poor Christian family, Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche was ten years old when his family moved to Tunis. He subsequently went to France between 1925 and 1928 to attend the École Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud. He became a poet, a critic, a journalist, and a politician of sorts; edited the *Revue littéraire française de Tunisie* from 1930 to 1942 and became the literary editor of the publishing house Charlot and editor of the journal *L'Arche*; worked at the ORTF

(French radio-TV) and was a journalist at Radio Suisse-Normande. Jean Amrouche also wrote articles for *Le Monde*, *L'Observateur*, and *Le Figaro.* Finally, he was one of de Gaulle's advisors and then an active militant in the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale).[24] This multifaceted and talented intellectual initiated a number of noteworthy debates between and concerning political forces (FLN and General de Gaulle), peoples (Algerians and French), modes of communication (oral and written), and social classes (the intellectual elite and the people). These debates echo aspects of Amrouche's poetry, in which he strove to establish links between entities at odds with each other, which accounts for an inner split that the poet divulges in his poems.

Jean Amrouche was twenty-eight in 1934 when he published his first collection of poetry, *Cendres*, which happens also to be the first Algerian collection of poetry in French. It was followed by *Étoile secrète* in 1937 and *Chants berbères de Kabylie* in 1939. The titles of the fragments included in *Cendres* (*Ashes*) reveal a world of suffering and separation. Consider these titles: "Brisures" (Splits), "Feuilles tombées" (Fallen leaves), "Ombres" (Shades), and "Chants du pays perdu" (Songs of the lost country); one poem is titled "Prière pour être débarrassé de moi-même" (Prayer to be rid of myself). At the origin of the poet's pain is the loss of a fundamental unity that he associates, like his Berber compatriot Tahar Djaout, with childhood. What Amrouche calls *l'esprit d'enfance* (the spirit of childhood) is, as writer Nabile Farès argues, the locus of Amrouche's enunciation. Farès even contends that *l'esprit d'enfance* designates what we receive in our heritage from poetic orality such as the mythic thought.[25] So, if childhood is the place of the poet's enunciation, the poet also conveys the voice of the child if he is not the child himself.

The child as a character appears repeatedly in this first collection and crystallizes several notions that the poet explores, notably that of unity and loss, the split (*brisure*) that it entails, and the desire and attempt to recover the original unity. When the unity of the world that the child inhabits is shattered, there is only pain, destitution, and a permanent wound. In "*Angoisse de la jeunesse*" (Anguish of the youth), the poet compares his soul to a wounded child (*un enfant blessé*). In "*Dénuement*" (Destitution), the poem closes on the image of a child's hand that opens itself in an angelic offering. The hand is wounded and then bleeds and finally closes into emptiness (*Et cette main blessée qui saignait dans le vent /S'est close sur le vide et dans le dénuement*).[26] The poet attempts to transcend through mysticism the feelings of pain and rupture he experiences. Here again, the figure of the child is invoked:

Les roses rouges du bonheur naîtront de l'obscurité
marine,
Et un Enfant nu,
Les bras chargés des Promesses venues du fond des
âges
Accueillera le Solitaire meurtri.
Et le conduira.[27]

(The red roses of happiness will emerge from sea darkness, and a naked child, his arms heavy with the promises that survived through the ages, will welcome the wounded loner and will guide him.)

The naked child guides the solitary broken soul to become one again. The child provides human beings access to a world of reconciliation of all differences, a world free of pain and suffering and in a state of perfect harmony. For Amrouche, human beings were separated from God, and this separation was replicated in that of the individual from Mother Earth and from one's own mother. Separation is therefore a natural part of the human condition:

La grande douleur de l'homme est d'être—et d'être séparé. Nous portons en nous avec la joie d'être vivants, de nous sentir animalement existants, l'amer regret du non-être. La mère qui nous a nourris de sa chair, la terre maternelle qui nous recevra, sont les corps qui nous rattachent au non-être ou si l'on veut à l'origine ineffable, au Tout dont nous nous sentons cruellement séparés. Ainsi l'exil et l'absence ne sont que les manifestations dans le temps d'un exil qui les transcende, d'un exil métaphysique. Par delà le pays natal, par delà la mère terrestre, il faut percevoir l'ombre faiblement rayonnante du Paradis perdu, et l'Unité originelle.[28]

(The great pain of mankind is to be—and to be separated. Within us, we carry both the joy to be alive and to feel that we exist in our animal nature, and the bitter regret of non-being. The mother who has nourished us with her flesh and the maternal earth that will receive us are the bodies that link us to the non-being or to the ineffable origin, to the Whole that we feel cruelly separated from. Thus, exile and absence are only the manifestations in time of an exile that transcends them, a metaphysical exile. Beyond the native country, beyond the terrestrial mother, one perceives the delicate radiant shadow of the lost Paradise and the original Unity.)

The metaphysical exile described here is felt more intensely, Amrouche tells us, by poets who are able to render it in language.[29] All other subsequent splits are but replicas of this original separation, including the French and Kabyle cultures that coexist within Amrouche that he nourishes and tries to reconcile despite tensions and conflicts. However, Amrouche feels that the reconciliation he aspires to and that could eventually lead to a sort of unity is unattainable. The two sides face each other in an endless opposition without any resolution, except in death, which annihilates all distinctions, all contradictions.[30] To the outside world, Amrouche emphasizes this aberrant condition that he calls "*hybridité culturelle*" (cultural hybridity). He declares:

> Je suis un hybride culturel. Les hybrides culturels sont des monstres. Des monstres très intéressants, mais des monstres sans avenir. Je me considère donc comme condamné par l'histoire.[31]
>
> (I am a cultural hybrid. Cultural hybrids are monsters. Very interesting monsters, but monsters without any future. I therefore consider myself condemned by history.)

While people from both sides of the Mediterranean might consider him an aberration and treat him accordingly, Amrouche also knew the essential role his hybridity played in bringing people together. While he could not reconcile France and Algeria—an inconceivable and impossible endeavor at that time—he created the necessary dialogue between the two worlds:

> Je suis le pont l'arche qui fait communiquer deux mondes mais sur lequel on marche et que l'on piétine, que l'on foule. Je le resterai jusqu'à la fin des fins. C'est mon destin.[32]
>
> (I am the bridge, the arch between two worlds but on which one walks and steps and tramples down. I will remain that until the very end. It is my destiny.)

The image of the bridge evokes the idea of separation but also, and more importantly here, a sense of connection. And this connection appears at several moments of Amrouche's career, such as in his role as pioneer of the literary radio interview.

Amrouche conceived a new venue for literary exchange through a series of radio interviews he conducted with well-known French writers of the time, such as André Gide, François Mauriac, Paul Claudel, Giuseppe Ungaretti, and Jean Giono. The idea was to question the writer for several hours

about his work and life through a new, autobiographical format. In doing so, Amrouche renders literature accessible to a larger audience since, as he puts it, one has to be a bit didactic and put oneself in the position of the honest and average person ("se mettre à la place de l'honnête/public/moyen").[33] Not only did this process bring so-called high literature to the common person, it also forced major French writers of the time to switch from the written form, in which they were comfortable and which they controlled, to oral performance, in which they sometimes felt awkward. In addition, Amrouche imposed the rule of improvisation so that the interview resembled a natural conversation between two people.[34]

This emphasis on orality is not innocent. It is a way for Amrouche to valorize orality, the richness of the spontaneous exchange, and the importance of the voice, elements at the core of Berber culture that have been undervalued and underappreciated. Promoting orality and imposing its rules might also have been a way for Amrouche to balance the sacrifice that went into the act of writing down his mother's poems and making public what felt like an intimate aspect of his life. In his introduction to *Chants berbères de Kabylie*, Amrouche declares, "en donnant ces chants berbères au public j'ai le sentiment de livrer un trésor privé, de me dessaisir d'un bien de famille" (by giving these Berber songs to the public, I have the feeling that I am giving away a private treasure, a family possession).[35] The reason writing feels like the surrender of a personal and private treasure is twofold. The poems are closely connected to his mother, and as Mouloud Mammeri puts it, Jean Amrouche sucked the verses along with his mother's milk.[36] Moreover, the passage from the oral to the written form—never mind the inevitable inadequacy of translation—is felt to be a renunciation, a necessary concession to the public domain in order to fend off the extinction of these living poems, which Amrouche thought was imminent: "Il fallait transcrire et traduire d'urgence ces chants, non seulement parce que leur survie tient au souffle de ma mère, mais aussi parce que le pays dont ils portent l'âme est frappé à mort" (One urgently had to transcribe and translate these songs not only because their survival holds to my mother's breath, but also because the country whose soul they carry is beaten to death).[37] And so, Amrouche's interviews were, once again, a way to connect.

Through the literary interviews, Amrouche also found an outlet for his own voice and a space wherein he could maintain a dialogue with other writers. However, his presence was so powerful that some found it overwhelming and others irritating, even exasperating.[38] Amrouche spoke eloquently of his own seemingly modest but enlightening role in these radio interviews. He construed these conversations as a play of mirrors and his

role as a way to bring about a new verbal art form in front of a microphone.[39] In these interviews Amrouche is much more than an interlocutor for the writers; he is also a critic and a fellow writer. His friend Armand Guibert spoke of Amrouche's interviews as the illuminating creation of "spoken criticism."[40] Amrouche himself was aware of this when he stated that the microphone is a direct means of expression that allows a spontaneous creation where one measures the distance from the spoken to the written word.[41] Still, Amrouche's own voice remained unheard. He declares:

> Mes entretiens avec Gide, Claudel—demain Mauriac—ont été des expériences et des épreuves importantes. . . . J'étais une voix collective. Rien de plus. Ma voix demeure cachée encore, inentendue. L'heure va sonner. Sera-ce mon heure? Je ne sais. . . . Mais il va falloir sortir de l'ombre des maîtres.[42]
>
> (My interviews with Gide, Claudel—Mauriac tomorrow—have been important experiences and tests. . . . I was a collective voice. Nothing else. My voice is still hidden, unheard. Time is coming. Will it be my time? I don't know. . . . But the time has come to step out of the shadow of the masters.)

Indeed, since the publication of his early collections of poetry, *Cendres* and *Étoile secrète*, Amrouche's literary voice had been mute, and he often lamented the difficulty of writing and creating, especially the novel he would never write.[43] In a letter to Janine Falcou-Rivoire, Amrouche mentions this book, which he calls the "endless letter":

> Une interminable lettre . . . qui serait ce livre dont je rêve de temps à autre, où je raconterai ma vie comme un roman. . . . Cette lettre je ne l'écrirai jamais. C'est trop tard. Alors je parle de temps à autre des fragments à travers l'œuvre des autres.[44]
>
> (An endless letter . . . that would be the book I dream about from time to time, where I would tell my life like a novel. . . . I will never write this letter. It is too late. So from time to time I speak about its fragments through the work of others.)

While Amrouche's work at the radio and his political activities might have impinged on his creativity and literary voice, as Dugas suggested,[45] his firm conviction that he would never write this book—he could not even finish the novel *La mort d'Akli* that he had started—points to something else. Amrouche experienced a sort of paralysis when it came to revealing his "personal voice," as opposed to the "collective voice" he represented to, for

example, radio listeners or his Algerian compatriots. In 1951, in a letter to his friend Marcel Reggui, he confesses:

> Tant de projets formés, esquissés, entrepris, et abandonnés—et jamais encore un effort porté à son terme. Comme si j'avais peur de moi, peur de mes paroles que je retiens de naître au jour depuis si longtemps.[46]
>
> (So many projects, shaped, sketched, begun, and abandoned—and not one effort carried through to completion yet. As if I was afraid of myself, afraid of my words that I have prevented from seeing the light of day for so long.)

Self-exposure is complicated and dangerous and can only manifest itself obliquely or, as Amrouche puts it, through the work of others. Accordingly, it is through the portrayal of the Berber king Jugurtha, who represents the Berber spirit, that Amrouche's character emerges.[47]

Critics have rightly argued that the vivid portrait Amrouche drew of Jugurtha is his own. Both Beïda Chikhi and Mouloud Mammeri see in Amrouche's essay on Jugurtha an indirect way for him to speak about himself. Chikhi writes:

> L'essai relève entièrement de la ruse inconsciente d'un fantasme d'appropriation de l'écriture d'un autre ou d'une autre, où se voilerait son désir de raconter sa propre histoire. Tout se joue sur la double scène de la séduction.[48]
>
> (The entire essay is tantamount to the unconscious trick involving a fantasy of taking over the writing of another, hiding the desire to tell one's own story. Everything revolves around the double game of seduction.)

Amrouche starts his essay with the hypothesis that there is an African temperament embodied by the Berber king Jugurtha, who is a symbol of African resistance to Rome. The essay functions, then, as an introduction to Jugurtha as a historical figure and is clear and straightforward in its form, though at times it is also lyrical and passionate, like a symphony with several emotional ranges and vertiginous falls. Amrouche set out to meet a serious challenge, for Jugurtha's personality is difficult to pin down and is often contradictory and elusive. And so, Amrouche's Jugurtha moves across a wide range of emotions, going from one extreme to the other, exuding an extraordinary energy and creativity one minute and falling into a strange

apathy the next. Yet, what finally emerges from Amrouche's portrait is Jugurtha's passion and irreducibility. He thrives in opposition and negation, enjoys controversy, and is predisposed to mysticism, for his soul is that of a poet. This passion and independence are the essence of effort and progress, but one has to direct them toward the world, as Amrouche claims at the end of his essay. He presents Jugurtha with as much passion as he would have done had he engaged in a self-portrait.

When friends and colleagues recall Amrouche's career and personality, their comments are reminiscent of his description of Jugurtha. They stress Amrouche's difficult personality, his pride and arrogance along with his always remaining mysterious. Jules Roy confided: "Son caractère à lui était épouvantable. Il ne pouvait presque supporter personne. Il se supportait difficilement lui-même."[49] (His personality was awful. He almost could not bear anyone. He could barely put up with himself.) Armand Guibert declared: "Le prestige d'Amrouche était grand. Volontiers sentencieux, il en imposait aux élèves, tandis qu'il irritait vite certains adultes. . . . Et cependant, de quelle séduction cet être n'était-il capable?"[50] (Amrouche's prestige was great. He was often sententious; he impressed students while he rapidly irritated adults. . . . And yet, of what seduction was this being not capable?) Among his numerous qualities and flaws, only Amrouche's intelligence and passion find unanimity.

While "L'éternel Jugurtha," published in 1946, could also be read as an early nationalist pamphlet extolling resistance in the face of foreign domination, it is in its portrayal of the relationship with the Other that this text is most compelling. Amrouche describes Jugurtha's ability to mimic the language, customs, and beliefs of the Other. His capacity for adaptation is so great that he seems an easy conquest, and yet at the very moment he seems to be conquered, Jugurtha's spirit of resistance awakens:

> Il prend toujours le visage d'autrui, mimant à la perfection son langage ses moeurs; mais tout à coup les masques les mieux ajustés tombent. . . . Nul, plus que lui, n'est habile à revêtir la livrée d'autrui: mœurs, langages, croyances, il les adopte tour à tour, il s'y plaît, il y respire à l'aise, il en oublie ce qu'il est jusqu'à n'être plus que ce qu'il est devenu. Jugurtha s'adapte à toutes les conditions, il s'est acoquiné à tous les conquérants; il a parlé le punique, le latin, le grec, l'arabe, l'espagnol, l'italien, le français, négligeant de fixer par l'écriture sa propre langue . . . Il semblerait donc qu'il fut facile de le conquérir tout à fait. Mais à l'instant même où la conquête semble achevée, Jugurtha, s'éveillant à lui-même, échappe à ce qui se flattait d'une ferme prise.[51]

(He always takes the face of the Other, imitating his/her language and morals to perfection, but suddenly the best-fitting masks fall. . . . No one can assume better than he can the livery of another: customs, languages, beliefs, he adopts them, in turns; it pleases him; he breathes ease, he comes to forget who he is, to be only what he has become. Jugurtha adapts to all conditions; he teamed up with all conquerors; he spoke Punic, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, and French, failing to fix in writing his own language. . . . It would seem thus that he was easy to conquer entirely. But at the very moment when the conquest seems complete, Jugurtha awakens and breaks away from what seemed to be a done deal.)

Jugurtha's remarkable facility for mimicking the Other to the point that the Other believes he has been totally conquered or assimilated recalls Amrouche's Frenchness: his perfect command of the French language surprised many, while his interlocutors were always fascinated by his tone of voice and his impeccable diction. Amrouche never missed an opportunity to read or even sing in public or in private.[52] His voice was a valuable asset and a seductive tool, notably for his work at the radio station. Amrouche, who taught Albert Memmi when he was a professor in Tunisia, appears in Memmi's autobiographical novel, *La statue de sel*, under the name Marrou. The narrator describes Marrou as someone who the other professors found arrogant and pretentious, but more importantly, too French:

C'était, pour ses collègues, un impardonnable scandale spirituel de voir ce métèque mieux manier le français que les ayants droit.[53]

(To his colleagues, it was an unforgivable spiritual scandal to see this *métèque* [an epithet for a non-French person] handle French better than the citizens can.)

In addition to sounding French, Amrouche knew French literature better than the French did, and during the interviews, which he led with ease and professionalism, his meticulous reading practice and perfect grasp of the texts made him as much an expert of the texts as their authors. Dugas mentions an episode when Amrouche engaged in long digressions about Paul Claudel's play *Tête d'Or* in front of the writer, who sat silent in admiration.[54] Amrouche was also a distinguished-looking man whose majestic demeanor irritated many around him. Memmi's narrator declares that his classmates mock Marrou's elegance and his majestic airs (*Mes camarades moquaient son élégance, son allure majestueuse, son port droit*).[55] There is no doubt that this portrait of Amrouche corresponds to that of Jugurtha, who adapted

so well that he forgot who he was until the very last moment, when he escaped total assimilation. Was Amrouche's literary life project not this very thing: waiting for the moment when he would "step out of the shadow of the masters" (*sortir de l'ombre des maîtres*) and make his own distinctive voice heard? Amrouche did not achieve this objective before his premature death, but he did facilitate the emergence of others' voices, notably those of writers he worked with and those of his Algerian compatriots. Henry Barraud called Amrouche "an artist of dialogue" (*un artiste du dialogue*) and "a genius of the Maieutics" (*un véritable génie de la maïeutique*).[56] Indeed, Amrouche's life, career, and particular social, religious, and cultural background (that of a poor Christian who spent his childhood in a Muslim environment, and a Berber, though also French in language and culture) made him a complex and unique intellectual figure familiar with liminal spaces—a valuable experience for dialogue. As Tassadit Yacine declares in her study of Algerian intellectuals, Amrouche is a precursor, the first who paved the way for the introduction of an African or hybrid (*métisse*) culture in the francophone literary world at a time when the cultural scene did not admit Africans.[57]

Amrouche's essay on Jugurtha, which Mouloud Mammeri proclaimed his masterpiece, is the only place where, through the enigmatic and contradictory character of Jugurtha, Amrouche reveals his intellectual posture and vibrant emotional life: independent, proud, sensitive, defiant, passionate, mystical, paradoxical: in short, elusive and irreducible.

Marie-Louise Taos Amrouche

The Other also plays an important role in the articulation of the self for the first female francophone voice from North Africa. Marie-Louise Taos Amrouche was born in Tunisia in 1913. She had four brothers, who, like her, had both a French and a Kabyle first name. In 1934 Taos went to a boarding school in Paris in order to prepare for a competitive examination but gave up within two months. It was after this distressing experience that she started writing her first novel, *Jacinthe noire,* published in 1947. Unlike her brother Jean, Taos trusted the writing process and used it as an outlet for her existential malaise and to find solace from her troubles. *Jacinthe noire* centers on Reine, a young Tunisian woman who has just arrived at a boarding school in Paris and finds herself completely at odds with the school and its students. The novel portrays Reine's unique, exuberant temperament and the slow rejection she endures, which culminates in her expulsion from the school for "incompatibility." The novel opens with this description:

> Je l'ai rencontrée au milieu d'autres, et tout d'abord mes yeux ne l'ont pas devinée. Puis, une manière de rire brutale, des gestes nerveux et exubérants l'ont isolée parmi les autres. Alors j'ai vu ses yeux noirs, étranges, offerts et insondables. Il me fallait aller vers elle.[58]
>
> (I met her when she was standing among a small crowd and, at first, my eyes didn't make her out. Then, a brutal laugh, nervous and exuberant gestures made her stand out from the crowd. Then I saw her dark, strange, open, and unfathomable eyes. I had to go toward her.)

This passage calls attention to the difference embodied by Reine, whose behavior and looks differ from those of the other students. Oddly, and despite the fact that the entire novel is about Reine's experience at this school, it is not told from her perspective but from that of a member of the group that rejects her. More importantly, despite the fact that *Jacinthe noire* clearly recounts Taos Amrouche's own devastating experience at a Parisian school, the author does not use the personal pronoun "I" to relate this experience. To recount Reine's story, Amrouche establishes Marie-Thérèse, another student, as the narrative voice of the text. Thus, Reine is the object of Marie-Thérèse's narration and perspective. This not only illustrates the presence of the Other in the elaboration of the self, but it also emphasizes the need to be acknowledged by the Other and, finally, demonstrates the difficulty of employing the first-person pronoun.

Monique Gadant, in her article "La permission de dire 'je,'" addresses the difficulties accompanying any attempt to write in the first person and also the indispensable need for authorization.[59] One way of circumventing such authorization for Taos Amrouche is to veil the other characters of her novels, changing their names and withholding personal information in order to protect them. As for writing in the first person in the Arabo-Berber tradition, this is new territory, construed as a sort of treason, as poet and writer Mohamed Kacimi-El Hassani claims, when he declares that the use of the pronoun I is traditionally considered an attribute of the devil.[60] The unity of the group is threatened by individuals who single themselves out, and the adventure of writing is just that.[61] While the need to tell her story in the hope of shedding some light on her existential difficulties is overwhelming, Taos Amrouche's project is complicated by her desire to protect herself and her relatives. Hence, despite the fact that many elements—characters, dates, events—attest to the strong autobiographical aspect of her novels, Taos Amrouche never attached her name to the narrative voice or used the personal pronoun I. In none of her novels does Amrouche identify herself with the narrator, not even in her last novel, *Solitude ma mère*, despite it

being a text of closure where she reflects upon her life from age eighteen to forty. Amrouche resisted conventional autobiography, which requires identification among the author, the narrator, and the character, and instead inhabited the indefinite space between fiction and autobiography, or "autofiction."[62] The ambiguity continues beyond the narrative frame, for just as with Taos' brother Jean, ambiguity is nestled within the writer's inner being. It appears in the different names Amrouche used with the publication of each novel. Her first novel, *Jacinthe noire*, was published under the name Marie-Louise Amrouche; the second, *Rue des tambourins*, under the name Marguerite Taos Amrouche; the third, *L'amant imaginaire*, under the name Taos Amrouche.

The first line of Amrouche's preface to the second novel, *Rue des tambourins*, is a mysterious declaration made by Noël to the protagonist, Marie-Corail Kouka: "Vous ne serez jamais heureuse!" (You shall never be happy). The same line appears toward the end of the novel, when Kouka's dearest and most trusted friend, Noël, who has been secretly in love with her for years, utters this statement that sounds like a prophecy. And so this second novel also opens with someone else's perspective that prompts the protagonist to engage in a reflexive process that takes the form of a novel. As the narrator reveals in the introductory page, Noël's prediction comes at a moment when Kouka's life is at a crossroads. Kouka rejects both Noël and Bruno, the two men dear to her, and realizes that something is amiss, that the reason for her failure to love and be loved is located in the distant past, which she intends to explore. On the first page, she declares:

> Je remontais le cours du souvenir, plus loin que notre arrivée à Asfar, . . . plus loin que l'exode de Tenzis . . . plus loin que l'enfance. Jusqu'à ce pays perdu, dans la montagne—notre berceau—. . . et plus loin encore, toujours plus loin . . . jusqu'à la source du mal.[63]
>
> (I looked back in time, further than our arrival at Asfar, . . . further than the exile at Tenzis . . . further than childhood. To the lost land, in the mountain—our cradle . . . and still further and further . . . to the source of evil.)

Kouka's examination naturally starts with her childhood, which is shaped by the stories and events that are told and that take place in her large family and also by the reign of two figures, Gida and Yemma, her grandmother and her mother, respectively. A few personal episodes stand out from the rest of the family narrative. During a visit to Kabylia, Kouka's grandmother takes her to the family's cemetery and shows her the gravesites where her

great-grandparents are buried, but then the grandmother points to the other side of the hill where they (Kouka and her Christian family) will be buried: "*Nous ici, et vous là-bas*" (Us here, and you over there).[64] This fundamental separation between *us* and *you* within the same family deeply affects the young girl and echoes other separations, some of which took place before Kouka's birth, such as her family's exile to Tunisia. Separation becomes a motif in her life. Another significant episode occurs when village women inquire about Kouka's eligibility for marriage, to which the grandmother angrily responds that Kouka is destined to live a different life:

> Sachez que Corail Iakouren est condamnée à porter cheveux courts, robes aux genoux, bras nus, oreilles sans boucles et chevilles sans anneaux.[65]
>
> (Know that Corail Iakouren [Kouka] is condemned to wear her hair short, with knee-length dresses, naked arms, her ears without earrings, and her ankles without rings.)

This time it is during her adult life that Kouka will be separated from her peers. Her education and her living in the city will impact how and whom she marries. It turns out that not only will Kouka be separated from her family and peers during her adulthood and for eternity after death but that she has always felt separated:

> Je connaissais déjà ce sentiment d'être exclue du cercle magique, j'éprouvais cette envie de courir me réfugier dans les jupes de Yemma. Pourquoi fallait-il que je fusse toujours "dépareillée"? . . . Que je me trouve au milieu de compagnes musulmanes ou françaises, j'étais seule de mon espèce. Aussi loin que je remonte dans le souvenir, je découvre cette douleur inconsolable de ne pouvoir m'intégrer aux autres, d'être toujours en marge.[66]
>
> (I already knew the feeling of being excluded from the magic circle. I felt like running and finding refuge in my mother's lap. Why was I always "mismatched"? . . . Whether I was with my Muslim or French girlfriends, I was the only one of my species. As far back as I can remember, I find this inconsolable pain of not being able to fit in with others, to always be on the margins.)

Kouka's recollection of a past experience of separation echoes Taos' brother Jean's response to separation that he traces back to the mother's womb. As mentioned earlier, childhood is for Jean Amrouche the place of enunciation,

and in the second section of Amrouche's novel, it turns out that for her, too, childhood is a reference. This section, titled "Entre Noël et Bruno," is dedicated to Kouka, but as the title announces, it is through her relationship to two men that Kouka strives to carve a space to talk about her own self. The attention the narrator gives to the members of her family in the first section anticipates the difficulty Kouka experiences in detaching herself from this familiar world where she exists as an integral part of a whole and not as a distinct individual. The clear break from the whole takes place when Kouka "becomes a woman" at age fourteen. This new condition changes Kouka's life, since her parents unexpectedly turn into fierce guardians of her reputation, but more importantly, it reveals her solitude and her state of separation. Indeed, suddenly Kouka realizes that she is a distinct individual separated from the rest of the family and that she is on her own to figure out who this separated individual is and what to do with this person, even while inhabiting an odd place between tradition and modernity. It is therefore not surprising that Kouka's attempt at articulating an individual voice in the second part of the novel requires the help of the Other.

It is through the portrayal of her relations to Noël and Bruno that childhood emerges as a sort of compass to help her walk in the dark and understand better her passionate personality, which she sometimes fears might drive her mad. More precisely, it is the image of the little girl that she carries within that guides Kouka in her first sentimental experiences and brings her to reject both Noël and Bruno. From the start, Noël, who is ten years older than Kouka, is protective of her while being attracted to her innocence, fragility, and frankness. Noël calls her "*petite fille*" (little girl) or *enfant* (child), and Kouka confides in him. One day she asks him to tell her about the "little girl with the black smock," whom he is the only one to know and love: "je vous en prie, parlez-moi de la petite fille en tablier noir que vous êtes seul à connaître et à aimer"[67] (Please tell me about the little girl with the black smock that only you know and love). But complicit and tender Noël lacks passion. Bruno, on the other hand, loves Kouka passionately but disregards "the little girl":

> —Le monde ne voit pas en toi une petite fille en tablier noir, mais une jeune fille de vingt ans.
> —Qu'importe le monde?[68]
>
> ("The world does not see you as a little girl with a black smock, but a twenty-year-old young woman."
> "Who cares about the world?")

Bruno believes that "the little girl" has to make room for the woman in Kouka, his own existence having started when he first met her. But the only way to Kouka's heart is through acknowledging and knowing "the little girl," who provides access to Kouka's particular world, origins, and family secrets. Isn't "the little girl" crucial to Kouka because she witnessed Kouka's tragedy: the separation from the group and the separation from her? (Kouka always imagines "the little girl" from an external point of view, with her black smock.) From that point on, Kouka strives to reunite with "the little girl" (who also represents her childhood) in order to feel whole again. Would then the role of men in her life be, at least to some extent, to help her reconnect with herself through acknowledging and loving both "the little girl" and the adult Kouka?

Interestingly, Taos Amrouche's last novel, *Solitude ma mère*, published in 1975 but written twenty years earlier, is divided into nine chapters, and each chapter is named after one significant man in the narrator's life: Le Beau Clair, Aldo, Robert, Louison, Michel, Saphir, Rachid, Le bon Edouard, and Le vieux Madrargue. It is again through the Other that Amrouche's narrator hopes to find solace and through the analysis of each relationship that she finally understands the reason for her inability to love. Clearly, the methodology and motivations suggest *Rue des tambourins*, and Aména, the narrator in *Solitude ma mère*, like Kouka and Reine, presents the same ailment and the same ineffective solution to find relief: revealing one's pain and opening one's heart, unfortunately all in vain. Aména is forty and declares that she is as deprived facing life as a baby in a crib. The introspection and self-scrutiny she hopes will provide her with answers and solace do not yield much. The sense of urgency with which she exposes herself in her writing and with which she discusses her actions, feelings, and desires is intense and clearly necessary for her very survival. Still, this exposure is unsuccessful.

Just like her brother, whose relationship to writing was fraught with difficulty and disappointment, the writing process brought Taos Amrouche dissatisfaction and disillusionment. The failure to know oneself is linked to the failure to efficiently interact and communicate with the Other, for the expression of the self is embedded in the recognition of the Other. Taos Amrouche's fictional work focuses exclusively on the difficulties associated with meaningful communication with the Other and with the exploration of the self. The constant failure to communicate entails a profound questioning of the self, which at times brings on despair. In these moments, Taos Amrouche blames her "hybridity," especially its Western component:

> Ignorante, poussant au gré du souffle rude de nos montagnes, mon destin eut été celui d'une fille de notre tribu, issue d'une orgueilleuse famille: ni Racine ni Mozart ne m'eussent manqué.[69]
>
> (Ignorant, tossed around by the harsh wind of our mountains, my destiny would have been that of a girl of our tribe, offspring of a proud family: I would have missed neither Racine nor Mozart.)

While Taos Amrouche's literary work did not enjoy much support during her lifetime and has only recently generated some academic interest, her second career as an interpreter of traditional Berber songs was much more rewarding, and Amrouche found some redemption in her musical career.[70] She collected and sang Berber traditional songs, immortalizing in different recordings these and the ones she had learned from her mother. Early in her singing career, Taos Amrouche embodied the spirit of the Berber songs she sang, to her mother's satisfaction and approval, as she "authorized" Taos Amrouche to render these traditional songs. While the mere need for authorization points to some form of (original) loss that required reappropriation, the performance of the songs produced a new sense of unity that Amrouche could not achieve in her fiction.[71]

Taos Amrouche was invited to sing in several cities around the world; many cultural celebrities (including Leopold Sedar Senghor, André Breton, and Kateb Yacine) admired her interpretations and recognized her talent, and in 1967 she received the Grand Prix de l'Académie du Disque for her first recording *Chants berbères de Kabylie*. Amrouche was invited to the Pan-African Festival in Algeria in 1969, though she was forbidden to sing because of Algeria's anti-Berber politics. Taos Amrouche also did research of her own and went to Spain to study the Alberca songs, the cultural vestiges of the Berbers of Andalusia between the eighth and fifteenth centuries, and she later produced a recording of these songs. She also produced programs for Radio France, such as *Chants sauvés de l'oubli*, and did research on oral literature, assembling and recording in written form Berber poems and folktales that were published in 1966 under the title *Le grain magique*. The success of Taos Amrouche's recordings and her collection of poems and folktales probably made up in some measure for the critical disregard of her literary work. And it is in her idiosyncratic interpretation of Berber songs that Taos Amrouche finally brought about a symbiosis between a personal and intimate voice and that of her Berber community. In *L'amant imaginaire*, she speaks of singing as an act of lovemaking:

> Dieu sait pourtant que j'ai conscience . . . de faire l'acte d'amour . . . chaque fois que je domine un de ces chants héroïques comme un coursier . . . Je sais ce qu'est l'amour chaque fois que je me suis vidée dans mes chants.[72]
>
> (God knows that I am aware . . . that I am making love . . . every time I master one of these heroic songs like a wild horse. . . . I know what love is every time I spend myself in my songs.)

Taos Amrouche felt freest to express herself when carried by the songs of her ancestors, when she was in charge and uninhibited in communion with her ancestors and the world. Her songs are the perfect synthesis of individual and communal expression. Such reconciliation is achieved with difficulty in writing, for at the core of the writing process lies a feeling of disconnection or loss personified by the missing lover, who eventually points to the same original loss as that of Jean Amrouche, a loss rooted in exile and language that led to the separation from the mother, who embodies the ultimate unity.

Mouloud Feraoun

Mouloud Feraoun was born in 1913 in Kabylia to a very poor family. He received a fellowship to go to school and later became a teacher, then a school principal, in Kabylia and Algiers. He was assassinated in March 1962 by the OAS, a French terrorist underground organization in Algeria opposed to Algerian independence.

Although Feraoun is now recognized as the first significant Algerian male francophone novelist, it was only after a long and laborious process that his first novel, *Le fils du pauvre* (*The Poor Man's Son*), was published in 1950 before being republished in Paris by le Seuil in 1954.[73] Indeed, the publication of *Le fils du pauvre* was a veritable obstacle course that started in 1944 when Feraoun met with Aimé Dupuy, his former director at the École normale, with whom he left a copy of the story of Fouroulou Menrad. In an article on the genealogy of the publication of Feraoun's first novel, Jeanne Adam traces every step of this long quest for publication and recognition. Her article reveals Feraoun's determination to have his story published, despite self-doubt, reservations, and apprehension, as the letters to his friends during this period attest. In 1946, the publishing house Charlot refused the manuscript, but far from being despondent or renouncing his project, Feraoun presented his novel titled *Menrad* for the Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Algérie. After several revisions and multiple unsuccessful submissions to

different publishing houses (each time he would send a copy of the manuscript to a press or a friend, Feraoun would copy it by hand), in 1949 Les Nouvelles Éditions Latines accepted the book for publication—with conditions, one of which was that it be prefaced by someone the author did not know.[74] Besides the other conditions associated with the acceptance of his novel for publication, Feraoun might have been wary that a preface from someone he did not know would exploit the novel to advance a specific agenda (such as assimilation). Finally, in 1950, Feraoun resolved to publish the novel at his own expense. Shortly after, in December 1950, he received the Grand Prix Littéraire de la ville d'Alger.

Why, one wonders, did Feraoun go to so much trouble to publish, at his own expense, a novel based on his childhood, especially given that he was the sole breadwinner in a large family? Feraoun's desire to have his narrative published was so intense that he knocked on every door and wrote to friends and acquaintances to ask for advice or assistance. The author claimed that the merit of the book hinges on the fact that the story of Menrad is his story and resembles that of a number of other Kabyle teachers, and that it shows the humanity of the Kabyles.[75] The novel also shows how education saved Menrad intellectually and materially, thanks to professors who taught him to "see" while living among the "blind," as the first line of the preface of *Le fils* suggests: "*Menrad, modeste instituteur du bled kabyle, vit 'au milieu des aveugles*'" (Menrad, a modest teacher from the Kabyle village, lives "amongst the blind").[76] Some critics, following the directions provided by Feraoun, read the novel as an ethnographic work, a viewpoint that is still common today. Other critics read the novel as an unsophisticated piece of prose from a teacher who simply reworked what he had learned in school. In a 1984 article, Christiane Achour called Feraoun's writing "une écriture assimilée" (assimilated writing).[77]

If we consider Feraoun's pressing desire to have his novel published and what this suggests, we might better understand the novel itself and avoid the instrumental line of interpretation that followed his death. Feraoun's unwavering determination to have his novel published—and therefore read—implies that it was for him a matter of life and death. And maybe it was. Like Menrad Fouroulou, his protagonist, Feraoun felt a strong complicity with the world of books; he was intelligent and ambitious; and, although humble and self-doubting, he knew he had some talent. In other words, Feraoun had found his calling. Also, like Menrad, who becomes a teacher, Feraoun chose to become a schoolteacher, too, an occupation that freed him and his family from want.[78] Adding to these personal details the historical and cultural circumstances of Feraoun's early life, one might

imagine the particularity of his adult life and the paradoxes involved, all of which only literature could render. In *Le fils du pauvre*, some of these intricacies surface from the outset.

One good example is the convoluted preface that presents the story of Fouroulou Menrad and serves as an introduction—Feraoun's own preface, as opposed to that of an unknown person—offered by an outside, informed, and supportive narrator. This anonymous narrator presents the manuscript, provides a framework for the story, and introduces the author—his literary ambitions and his effort to write, as well as his failure, since he had abandoned his text in a drawer. The narrator's perspective on the manuscript and its author is equivocal, for while he supports him, he also openly denigrates the author and questions his literary talent, stating that "poor Menrad is incapable of philosophizing," he is "not a genius," and "he has no imagination." Menrad is portrayed as a mediocre and unmotivated author: he was not keen on publishing his text ("il n'avait pas besoin de se faire imprimer"—he did not need to be published), for he merely wanted to leave his story behind for his children and grandchildren, and he finally gave up "une enterprise au dessus de ses forces" (an endeavor that was too difficult for him).[79] Menrad's renouncement is final and untroubled. In addition, the narrator creates a clear break between the author and his text, a separation that reassures and even empowers the reader. While the author is declared unthreatening and is dismissed, his manuscript is left behind for the reader to discover, enjoy, interpret, and—most of all—to own. The notebook is offered as an orphaned text, like a valuable painting one might discover abandoned in an attic. It is described as a "*chef-d'oeuvre avorté*" (an aborted masterpiece), disconnected from its context and offering a gateway to another time and place. It is in this safe (and exciting) atmosphere that the narrator invites the reader to participate in this unique discovery and listen to Menrad's voice: "ouvrons-le . . . nous t'écoutons" (let's open it . . . we are listening to you). The narrator's paternalistic and belittling tone reassures the (French) reader, while his eagerness draws the reader to the text, as with other prefaces in the past. In so doing, the narrator obscures the real value and significance of the author and his manuscript, although they subtly shine through via humor and irony: Menrad is modest, but he wants to write like Montaigne or Rousseau; his work was forgotten and aborted, but it is really a masterpiece; it was left in a drawer for only his children to read, but it might in the end be read by the entire world ("*connue de tous*"). This clever "double entendre" is possible only because of Feraoun's ability to be critical of himself and his society while remaining generous and sensitive

and retaining a strong bond with the world he comes from. It is this sensitivity and sharpness that make his voice unique.

It is not surprising that Feraoun demonstrates the same talent and insight when he addresses the Other in the novel (here, it is the French tourist). Indeed, as with the works mentioned previously, *Le fils du pauvre* concerns the French Other, and it is through the eyes of the Other that the novel opens. The narrator (Menrad himself) introduces and explains his culture and presents the perspective of the dominated after he has had access to the dominant culture and perspective. He uses the reader's cultural frame of reference (for his readers were mostly French) to introduce the Berber viewpoint; the text therefore starts with the very perspective that the writer wants to discard. *Le fils du pauvre*, a partly autobiographical novel, describes everyday life in Kabylia seen through the eyes of a young boy named Fouroulou Menrad, an almost exact anagram for the author's name. The first lines of the novel state:

> Le touriste qui ose pénétrer au cœur de la Kabylie admire par conviction ou par devoir des sites qu'il trouve merveilleux . . . cependant nous imaginons très bien l'impression insignifiante que laisse sur le visiteur le plus complaisant la vue de nos pauvres villages.[80]
>
> (The tourist who dares to enter in the heart of Kabylia, out of conviction or out of duty, admires sites that he finds marvelous . . . however, we can very well imagine the insignificant impression that the view of our poor villages leaves on the most charitable visitor.)

The text opens with the tourist's flawed perception, which Menrad intends to correct with the expertise of a cultural insider.[81] So the narrator sets himself to write from within the culture, although Menrad is also well versed in French culture and has mastered the Western classics: "il a lu Montaigne et Rousseau, il a lu Daudet et Dickens (dans une traduction)"[82] (he has read Montaigne and Rousseau; he has read Daudet and Dickens [in translation]). Indeed, from the outset, Feraoun engages in Western classical philosophical debates on human nature, man's vanity, and the value of writing about oneself, all in a single sentence:

> Loin de sa pensée de se comparer à des génies; il comptait seulement leur emprunter l'idée, "la sotte idée" de se peindre.[83]
>
> (Far from the thought of comparing himself to geniuses, he only wanted to borrow from them the idea, "the foolish idea" of painting oneself.)

The idea of writing about oneself was new not only to Feraoun (and to the world he came from) but also to the sixteenth-century French writer and philosopher Michel de Montaigne. In the introduction to his narrative, Menrad places himself in Montaigne's literary lineage, because, unlike most of his contemporaries, Montaigne examined the world through his own experiences and personal judgment and extensively wrote about his thoughts and character. This self-scrutiny, argues Montaigne, is valuable even if no one reads his work, for in the process of describing himself to others, he acquires a better understanding of himself:

> Et quand personne ne me lira, ai-je perdu mon temps de m'être entretenu tant d'heures oisives à pensements si utiles et agréables? . . . Me peignant pour autrui, je me suis peint en moi de couleurs plus nettes que n'étaient les miennes premières, je n'ai pas plus fait mon livre que mon livre ne m'a fait.[84]
>
> (And if no one reads me, have I wasted my time, entertaining myself for so many idle hours with such useful and agreeable thoughts? . . . Painting myself for others, I have painted my inward self with colors clearer than my original ones. I have no more made my book than my book has made me.)[85]

By borrowing the idea of "painting oneself" from Montaigne and other Western writers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Fouroulou Menrad also endorses Montaigne's argument that writing about oneself leads to self-knowledge. The adjective *sot* (foolish, silly) that Feraoun uses summons Pascal's harsh condemnation of Montaigne's self-portrait. Indeed, for French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal, Montaigne's self-portrait is inappropriate and foolish:

> Le sot projet que Montaigne a eu de se peindre! Et cela non pas en passant et contre ses maximes, comme il arrive à tout le monde de faillir, mais par ses propres maximes, et par un dessein premier et principal! Car de dire des sottises par hasard et par faiblesse, c'est un mal ordinaire; mais d'en dire à dessein, c'est ce qui n'est pas supportable.[86]
>
> (The foolish project of describing himself! And this not casually and against his maxims, since everyone makes mistakes, but by his own maxims, and by first and chief design. For to say silly things by chance and weakness is a common misfortune, but to say them intentionally is unbearable.)

By invoking both Montaigne and Pascal at the outset of his narrative, Fouroulou Menrad positions himself within the French literary tradition while simultaneously creating his own writing space where irony is central. When he writes "Loin de sa pensée de se comparer à des genies" (Far from the thought of comparing himself to geniuses), he only partially means what he says, since Menrad does want to compare himself to those so-called geniuses. The adverb *seulement* ("he *only* wanted to borrow from them the idea, 'the foolish idea' of painting oneself" [my italics]) is also ironic given the novelty, the difficulty, and the implications of writing about oneself in Menrad's culture. Finally, the use of *sot* both admits the self-indulgence that the project gives rise to and affirms its crucial necessity.

To return to Menrad's description of his world, it seems that the task at hand is intertwined with the tourist's twisted perception, a viewpoint that is omnipresent during the narrator's attempt to present a fairer picture of his society. Thus, no matter how perceptive the exercise, it is bound to be the result of the previous confrontation with and integration of the gaze of the Other. This aspect of Feraoun's novel is part of a psychological framework identified as *dédoublement* or *hybridité*.[87] Besides reflecting an accumulation or an alliance of several components, what emerges from *Le fils du pauvre* could also be identified as a multiple consciousness, close to the notion of double-consciousness developed by African American writer W.E.B. Du Bois. This notion, reminiscent of Bakhtin's dialogism—also used by Merolla—suggests a constant interaction among several equivalent forces, which combine to create an internal dialogue.

Menrad's internal dialogue is replicated externally with the Other (the French) but also with his Kabyle compatriots, since his education and position as a teacher and a school principal set him apart from his fellow villagers. Still, far from being condescending toward the villagers who are not educated and cannot read (again, they are "blind"), Menrad often values their wisdom and common sense. In the second part of *Le fils du pauvre*, the anonymous narrator—who now identifies himself as Menrad's friend, a "brother," and who reappears to bring the novel to a close—reiterates the importance of the group in a person's life, even Menrad's. He declares,

> Tu serais tenté de mépriser un peu les autres. . . . Tu aurais tort, Fouroulou, car tu n'es qu'un cas particulier et la leçon, ce sont ces gens-là qui la donnent.[88]
>
> (You could be tempted to despise a bit the others. . . . You would be wrong, Fouroulou, for you are only one particular case, and it is these people who teach you the lesson.)

It is in *L'anniversaire*, which is composed of several chapters told by the narrator that were originally included in *Le fils du pauvre*, that Menrad is portrayed as different from his compatriots—and often not in a way that is advantageous to him. This segment of the novel deals with the Second World War and its impact on the village. Menrad receives the only newspaper in the village, and people ask him to comment on the war, but he cannot persuade anyone of his views. Elsewhere, Menrad is shown admonishing himself for minor sins while his neighbors are busy analyzing the situation (Pendant que Fouroulou . . . se donnait à lui-même des leçons de morale . . . les fellahs, ses voisins, se mirent à analyser froidement la situation).[89] Finally, when American and British troops arrive in Algeria, Menrad wants to communicate his enthusiasm for this to his compatriots, who nonetheless remain indifferent:

> Tu peux parler, maître, lui disent-ils. Nous te croyons sur parole. L'Amérique est un réservoir de blé et de vêtements. . . . Mais il nous faut d'abord la recevoir. Nous attendons. Là encore, ils eurent raison contre leur instituteur trop bavard ou trop naïf.[90]
>
> (You can talk, master, they told him. We believe you. America is a breadbasket and a storehouse of clothes. . . . But we first need to receive it. Let's wait. Once again, they were correct against their teacher, who was too talkative or too naïve.)

Along with Menrad's appreciation and respect for his compatriots' discernment, the narrator also invites criticism of his society in an often subtle way, which is all the more effective, as Naget Khadda argues in an article on the allegory of femininity in *Le fils du pauvre*. Khadda deconstructs Feraoun's portrayal of several female figures to whom Menrad is much attached. And it is through Menrad's rendering of his emotional attachment to these women, who are compelling and formidable in their way, followed by their devastating demise, that the novel becomes critical of the treatment of women in traditional Kabyle society. Unwittingly, the author even becomes, according to Khadda, the vehicle for these women's voices that were otherwise bound to remain silent ("Ainsi lui fut-il octroyé la capacité de capter et de transmettre la voix silencieuse des femmes").[91]

Like Taos and Jean Amrouche, Feraoun finally addresses loss, which is once again associated with childhood. Menrad's childhood is forever associated with his two aunts, who taught him to love, dream, and be happy. This world collapses when his two aunts die at the end of the first part of the novel. The section ends with this paragraph:

> Nous n'eûmes plus alors notre bon refuge, notre cher nid, personne à aimer en dehors de nos parents, personne qui s'intéressât à nous. Nous n'avions plus qu'à nous serrer peureusement autour du père et de la mère.[92]
>
> (We then lost our good refuge, our dear nest, no one to love besides our parents; no one was interested in us. We could only fearfully huddle around our father and mother.)

The devastating loss puts an end to childhood altogether. Life has diminished around the father and mother, while the world where Menrad is central to his family also disintegrates. Indeed, his days as the only boy in the family end with the birth of a baby brother, which opens the second part of the novel. Menrad stops writing his journal after the death of his aunts, when a world has come to an end, and it is another narrator, his friend, who takes over the narration.

Like Jean and Taos Amrouche, Feraoun occupies a third space that he claims as his. It is familiar and foreign, comfortable and uncomfortable. However, the dialogue that takes place within is not replicated in the outside world, and Feraoun was much distressed by the widening abyss among the different communities in Algeria. In 1951, he had politely complained to Albert Camus about the absence of indigenous characters (Arabs here, since the novel is set in Oran) in *La peste*.[93] In another letter to Camus, in 1958, his tone is much more commanding and yet despondent:

> Ainsi, il y a vingt ans, deux communautés vivaient côte à côte depuis un siècle, se tournant délibérément le dos, totalement dépourvues de curiosité et, de ce fait, aussi peu susceptibles de se comprendre l'une que l'autre, n'ayant de commun que leur mutuelle indifférence, leur entêtement à se mépriser et cet inhumain commerce qui lie le faible au fort, le petit au grand, le serviteur au maître.[94]
>
> (So, twenty years ago, two communities had been living side by side for a century, deliberately turning their back on each other, with no curiosity whatsoever and, because of that, just as unlikely to understand each other. They only had in common their mutual indifference, their stubborn contempt for each other, and this inhuman trade that binds the weak to the strong, the small to the great, the master to the servant.)

This declaration is emblematic of what Feraoun feared the most: the end of dialogue and the triumph of the extremes. He put all his energy toward

building bridges—especially in his profession as a schoolteacher and through his publications—and toward creating the dialogue that was sorely missing in Algeria. Moreover, like Jean and Taos Amrouche, Mammeri, and Ouary, Feraoun felt the urgent need to contribute to the valorization of his Berber culture and ensure its survival. To that end, he researched Berber oral literature and translated and presented a major collection of Kabyle poems titled *Les poèmes de Si Mohand*. Feraoun devoted half of the manuscript to a substantial introduction to the Kabyle poet and his work.

Mouloud Mammeri

For most Kabyles, Mouloud Mammeri was a legend in his lifetime. His legacy as an accomplished writer, anthropologist, and intellectual is immense; it includes novels, dramas, short stories, translations of poems and folktales, and numerous articles and essays on oral literature, ethnology, and poetry. Born in 1917 in Kabylia, Mammeri attended elementary school in his village before going to Rabat, Algiers, and then Paris. While serving as an enlisted soldier during the Second World War, the first time until October 1940, followed by reenlistment after the American landing, Mammeri stayed in different cities in France, Italy, and Germany.[95] After the war, he became a professor in Algiers. In 1947, Mammeri was already a militant for Algerian sovereignty, but it was during the Algerian War that he was heavily involved in the revolution.[96] With the independence of the country, Mammeri hoped to launch a new Berber studies program and pleaded with the authorities to support Berber language and culture courses. His request was denied under the pretext that the study of Berber was an invention of the French missionaries (Pères Blancs).[97] Still, Mammeri taught Berber language courses informally at the University of Algiers until 1973. In 1980, when his lecture on ancient Kabyle poetry ("poèmes kabyles anciens") was banned by the Algerian authorities, violent riots broke out and led to what is known as the Berber Spring. Mammeri also became the first president of the Union of the Algerian Writers in 1963. From 1969 to 1981, he directed the CRAPE (the Anthropological, Prehistoric, and Ethnographic Research Center) in France. In 1982, he founded the CERAM (Center for Amazigh Studies and Research) and the journal *Awal* in Paris.

In 1938–39, Mammeri published three significant articles on Berber society.[98] This intellectual project is reminiscent of Jean Amrouche's essay "L'éternel Jugurtha," for the same energy and passion inhabits both works. Both writers want to understand the mechanisms and dynamics of Berber societies and uncover the reasons for these societies' permanence through

time and their inability to cohere as a nation or civilization. While Mammeri's articles are less lyrical and passionate than "L'éternel Jugurtha," they convey the same sense of urgency and the same desire to make sense of Berber contradictions throughout history. In 1950, Mammeri also published the first article on Kabyle poetry by an Algerian writer.[99] Two years later, he published *La colline oubliée* and then *Le sommeil du juste* and *L'opium et le bâton*, with the three novels forming a trilogy that spans the period from the Second World War to the Algerian War. Each novel explores the challenges that individuals and the traditional society as a whole face when confronted with major changes brought about by war and the process of (an imposed) acculturation. Interestingly, the village emerges as a significant place in all three novels. For example, in each novel there is a protagonist who resembles or shares similarities with the author, though none is clearly autobiographical. Mammeri, like his fellow Berber writers, portrays the life that he knows and the issues and situations he is familiar with, which include the presence of the French Other, within and outside oneself, and the idea of loss, a recurrent motif in this corpus.

La colline oubliée is by far the most personal novel of the trilogy. It records the life of a group of young men and women in a Kabyle village that disintegrates, their lives changed forever by their entrance into adulthood and the advent of the war. What emerges clearly is the sense of loss—that is, the loss of innocence and of a unity felt as a way of life, a kind of organic wholeness that takes place in a village, a site akin to paradise and symbolized by the group's meeting place, Taasast (the guard), nestled on top of a hill. The village itself is called Tasga; it embodies the idea of refuge, the place of origin. Tasga reappears in other novels by Mammeri, including the last one, *La traversée*, published in 1982, which portrays Mourad, a journalist who decides to leave the world of simulacrum behind to return to his village. Tasga is the beginning and the end of everything. It is especially the place where the youth of Taasast spent their cheerful and insouciant childhood, and where their friendships and love for each other were born and flourished. The story of Mokrane and Aazi is at the center of *La colline oubliée*. Their love is thwarted by tradition, and their separation ends tragically. Interestingly, Mokrane has much in common with the author. Like Mammeri, Mokrane is a student when the war starts. He is drafted in the army, goes to France, and marries Aazi, a member of the Taasast group—Mammeri's own wife is also named Aazi.

The dissolution of the group is ineluctable when the young men are required to fight France's enemy and when several members of the group, including Mokrane, die (of different causes). At the end of the novel, Menach

decides to leave the village forever. Before his departure, he goes to his friend Mokrane's tomb to say goodbye:

> Je ne reviendrai jamais sur cette colline oubliée où je ne te retrouverai plus. . . . Tu restes, toi, fidèle aux lieux où nous avons vécu notre rêve commun. Aussi te dis-je adieu! Adieu jusqu'au jour prochain où, à coup sur, mon âme retrouvera la tienne et celle d'Aazi, d'Idir, de Kou pour refaire ensemble Taasast dans un monde ou la souffrance ni l'obstacle ne seront plus. Adieu, Mokrane.[100]
>
> (I will never come back to this forgotten hill where I will not find you again. . . . You remain faithful to the place where we lived our common dream. So I tell you goodbye! Goodbye until the day when, for sure, my soul will reunite with yours and that of Aazi, Idir, and Kou to re-create Taasast in a world without suffering and obstacle. Farewell, Mokrane.)

Menach's final adieu to his friend attests to the depth and strength of the group's attachment to each other, a bond that survives beyond death. The paradise they created and the unity they experienced are shattered and can be recovered only in the afterlife, where all differences and pain disappear. The agony of the loss (of unity) expressed here echoes the work of Jean Amrouche. Other issues appear peripherally in the novel, including the threatening of the traditional value system when ideas of freedom drift in from the West, ideas that are irresistible to the village youth. The novel also reveals the existence in Kabylia of a secret organization against the colonial regime much earlier than the outbreak of the war (the novel is set in the late 1930s to early 1940s), as well as indirect criticisms of the colonial authority. For example, a strange illness descends upon the country; it is so devastating that even children do not play anymore. However, *La colline oubliée* triggered much controversy.[101] Ultimately, this first novel provides a genuine entry into a familiar world—Mammeri's own, with its trials and tribulations. Moreover, the novel depicts in a compelling way one of those invaluable moments in life that are lost forever.

It is in his second novel, *Le sommeil du juste*, that Mammeri addresses the confrontation of the Berber with the Other (the French), a confrontation represented by the inner conflicts of the protagonist, Arezki Aït-Wandous. Arezki comes from a poor Kabyle family and goes to a French school that influences his later rejection of his Berber background. Enlisted in the army, he goes to cities in France and Europe and becomes disillusioned with French civilization, which he finally rejects. This coming-of-age novel,

whose protagonist has a violent realization that the cherished Western ideals he learned in school are but smoke and mirrors, is reminiscent of Albert Memmi's *La statue de sel*. Memmi's protagonist goes to Argentina and leaves everything and everyone behind, while Arezki is put in jail with his family, with whom he reconnects.

Arezki's frail and effeminate demeanor liberates him from chores and masculine labor and allows him to go to school, becoming the literate person in the village. The novel opens with a symbolic break between Arezki and the traditional order of his father. The passage below signals the break between the new, individual frame of mind and the shared collective wisdom. The scene takes place in 1940 near the fountain in the village of Ighzer, where a group of men discuss the war and its impact on their lives:

> —Il faut souhaiter la victoire de ceux-ci, disait Toudert (ceux-ci étant les Français) . . .—Mais l'honneur, cousin Toudert, dit Sliman, l'honneur kabyle c'est plus que tout, plus que la paix, la richesse . . . plus que la vie . . . plus que la mort.
>
> C'est alors qu'Arezki avait ricané:
> —L'honneur c'est une plaisanterie.
> Et, comme un vieillard s'était écrié:
> —Le diable parle par ta bouche. Maudis Satan pour qu'il parte de toi.
> Arezki avait répondu:
> —Je me moque du diable et de Dieu.
> Tous les hommes s'étaient levé à la fois.[102]
>
> ("We should wish for the victory of those ones," said Toudert (those ones were the French) . . ."But honor, cousin Toudert," said Sliman, "Kabyle honor is more important than anything, more than peace, wealth . . . more than life . . . more than death." That's when Arezki sneered: "Honor is a joke." And when an old man cried, "The devil speaks through your mouth. Curse Satan so that he leaves you." Arezki answered, "I don't care about the devil or God." All the men got up at the same time.)

It is in the ultimate public space—the village fountain—that Arezki challenges tradition, religion, and the respectable older men present. Obviously, Arezki wants to show his dissidence publicly, an act that is the culmination of his long estrangement from his family and people. After the chaos that follows Arezki's blasphemous statement, a delegation of old men from the village calls on Arezki's father to punish his son for his public offense. Father

and son have a discussion, which turns into a philosophical argument about God. The father realizes the extent of his son's alienation as a result of his contact with French civilization and values. After Arezki's final declaration that God does not exist, the father reaches for his gun and Arezki runs for his life.

The novel opens on this disruptive scene, setting the tone for a text whose main motifs are rupture and alienation. Traditional customs and values are undermined by the values of the modern world, which are diffused through education, war, and the subsequent proximity with the French. It is Arezki who incarnates acculturation, this condition that his people construe as a sort of malady. Thus, all the subsequent calamities that fall on Ighzer are directly linked to the bullet that missed Arezki:

> Ce n'est que longtemps après qu'on s'aperçut que les calamités qui se déchainèrent par la suite sur Ighzer pendant des années provenaient toute de lui et que cette balle, qu'on avait crue vaine, avait été comme le caillou qui déclenche l'avalanche; nulle force ne fut plus capable d'en arrêter les suites.[103]
>
> (It took us a long time to realize that the tragedies that befell Ighzer for years could all be traced back to him and the bullet. This bullet that we all thought of as futile at first was in fact the rock that started the avalanche; no power was able to stop it in its course.)

Arezki's estrangement from his family started early on. His frail constitution as a child made him vulnerable to teasing from his brother, with comments such as "Le vent souffle aujourd'hui . . . accrochez Arezki, il risque de s'envoler" (the wind is blowing today . . . hang on to Arezki; he might fly away).[104] Since he was of little use to his family, Arezki was sent to school in Tasga, a village nearby, for there was no school in Ighzer. Tasga represents the first place of exile for the child, who lives there with an old aunt and visits his family only during vacations. It is during Arezki's visits to Ighzer that his family notices changes in the young boy. One time, Arezki comes back with long hair, for which he receives a beating from his father; another time, he comes back wearing a pair of espadrilles, because "les cailloux lui faisaient mal à la plante des pieds" (the pebbles were hurting the soles of his feet).[105] Such extravagance is unheard of in the village, where all walk in their bare feet or wear ox-skin sandals. Arezki would also bring "interminable" books, which he would read during his stay in Ighzer. Tasga is the origin of Arezki's transformation and represents change and modernity. It

is Tasga's anarchist teacher, M. Destouche, who teaches frail Arezki to be intellectually audacious and to argue, for instance, that God does not exist. The gradual estrangement of Arezki from his Berber background, as well as his process of acculturation, lead to his public declaration with which the novel opens and which announces his disavowal of his village world. Since his father's bullet also symbolizes the father's disavowal, the desire for separation is reciprocal and complete.

While Arezki's involvement with the French and French civilization develops progressively, his father's first encounter with the French administration is brutal. His meeting with the *commissaire* (police commissioner) is reminiscent of some memorable scenes in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where African and British value systems confront each other. The father is summoned by the *komisar* after he fires his gun, but the old man is pleased to finally meet the commissioner, since he wants to see him anyway to complain about the French teacher, who has a bad influence on his son's behavior, and to talk about other matters regarding the dire situation of his family:

> Il entra sans mot dire et resta debout devant le bureau, ne sachant que faire de ses mains. L'administrateur . . . lui dit quelque chose en arabe. Le père ne répondit pas, l'administrateur se leva, de nouveau furieux, baragouina quelque chose. Un cavalier entra et . . . lui demanda pourquoi il ne répondait pas. "Tout le monde ici est-il devenu fou?" pensa le père.
>
> —Dis-lui dit-il au cavalier, que je ne comprends pas l'arabe. Le cavalier traduisit.
> —L'administrateur te demande si tu sais parler français?
> —Non plus, dit le père. Je suis d'Ighzer: il n'y a pas d'école chez nous. . . .
> —L'administrateur te dit qu'il ne t'a pas convoqué pour que tu donnes ton avis sur ce qui se passe dans la commune.
> —Je ne faisais que répondre a une question qu'il m'avait posée. Mais si j'ai dit quelque chose qui l'offense, je lui en demande pardon. . . .
> —L'administrateur te demande si tu ne pourrais pas parler français comme tout le monde.
> —Dis-lui, si ce n'est pas l'offenser, que le kabyle est la langue de mes pères.
> Le cavalier ne traduisit pas: sans doute était-ce aussi considéré comme une offense?[106]

(He entered without a word and stood in front of the desk, not knowing what to do with his hands. The administrator . . . said a few words in Arabic. The father didn't answer; the administrator, furious once again, stood up and jabbered something. A horseman came in and . . . asked why he was not answering. "Has everyone gone mad?" thought the father.
"Tell him," he said to the horseman, "that I don't speak Arabic." The horseman translated.
"The administrator asks whether you can speak French."
"I can't," said the father. "I am from Ighzer: there are no schools in our village. . . ."
"The administrator says that he didn't send for you to ask for your opinion about the affairs of the district."
"I was just answering his question. But if I said something that offended him, I apologize. . . ."
"The administrator would like to know why you can't speak French like everybody else."
"Tell him—I don't mean to offend him—but Kabyle is the language of my forefathers."
The horseman didn't translate: maybe it was also considered an affront?)

Because the rumor was that the father's family retained bad feelings toward the French, the commissioner had summoned him to take away all of the family's ration cards. When the father protests, he is asked if he wants to go to prison: "Le père n'en revenait pas qu'un homme pût parler sur ce ton à un autre homme et lui dire des choses aussi inconsidérées"[107] (The father could not believe that a man could speak to another man in such a tone and tell him things that are so inconsiderate). The commissioner also reminds the father that he has not paid his taxes, and since the father cannot pay them and his land is already mortgaged, the commissioner suggests that he mortgage his house. The injustice and disrespect that the father endures during this interaction with the French policeman leaves him speechless, and he returns home profoundly shocked and crushed. The father wanders all day in a daze and finally decides to go home at night, in order not to see or speak to anyone, so great are his consternation and stupor, when suddenly a man jumps in front of him. It is the mayor of Ighzer, to whom he has not spoken in thirty years because of a centuries-old feud:

Après que nous aurons fini de parler, dit l'Amin quand ils furent assis, tu retourneras à ton clan et moi au mien. Le père sentit se desserrer

l'étreinte autour de sa poitrine: qu'il fait bon avoir affaire à des hommes.[108]

(After we are done talking, says the Amin when they sat down, you will return to your clan and me to mine. The father felt the grip around his chest loosen: how good it felt to deal with men.)

The clear opposition between the abject interaction with the *komisar* and the "reasonable" exchange the father has with a foe, despite centuries of feud, reveals a new development among rival clans and ancient enemies. Indeed, as the novel suggests, centuries-old enemies come together against a common one: the French.

This new alliance is clearly stated at the end of the novel, when Arezki is imprisoned and finds several members of his family already there, including his father. This proximity first reconciles him with his family after a long psychological and physical journey. Indeed, Arezki joined the army with fervor to defend the principles he believed in—recalling Alexandre's same enthusiasm in Memmi's *La statue de sel*. And Arezki, like Alexandre, quickly became disenchanted after experiencing injustice, racism, and bad treatment. During a stay in prison, he writes a long letter to his (formerly) favorite French professor, condemning him for his teaching, which Arezki was forced to embrace. Arezki finally speaks of the depersonalization he went through during this process:

Dès le premier soir j'avais été pour mes camarades l'ennemi, longtemps pour tout le monde, je restai l'étranger. J'errai dans un monde hostile ou indifférent. . . . Il fallait chaque jour m'arracher à un peu de ce qui avait été moi; je ne croyais pas que ce dût être si douloureux.[109]

(From the very first evening, I was the enemy for my comrades, and for a long time and for everyone, I remained the foreigner. I wandered in a world hostile or indifferent. . . . Every day I had to strip myself of a little bit of what had been me; I did not know that it would be so painful.)

The letter echoes the declaration he made publicly at the outset of the novel in front of the Kabyle audience. In both instances, Arezki articulates his difference, his individuality. In the letter, Arezki proclaims his rejection of the French education he received—in a notable scene he gathers all his French classics and sets them on fire before desecrating them by urinating on them in public. Arezki's disavowal of his French education is all the more difficult because of the sacrifices he made to absorb it and the distance that grew

between him and his family as a result. On his visits to the village, his father would say "tu es mort aux choses et les choses mortes à toi. Tu traverses tout comme un étranger" (you are dead to things as things are dead to you. You cross everything as a foreigner),[110] while Arezki would think to himself that it was they who were dead to the world, for he knew things whose existence they could not imagine (Mort au monde? Mais c'est vous qui l'êtes. Je sais, moi, des choses dont votre sagesse ne se doute même pas).[111] It was in France that Arezki sought out his compatriots and supported their nationalist organization.

Arezki is also reconciled with his extended family, his cousin Toudert's family, longtime enemy of Arezki's family. The common battle puts an end to a three-century-old curse that has been carried over from one generation to the next. The reconciliation is described as a cleansing experience:

> La malédiction? . . . Et quand nous sortirons d'ici tous purs, tous libres, tous enfin libres, nous ne la trouverons pas à la porte qui nous attend. Elle est morte avec la vieille ère. . . . Notre temps est venu d'être heureux.[112]
>
> (The curse? . . . And when we leave here, all pure, all free, all finally free, we will not find it there waiting for us at the door. It is dead and gone with the old guard. . . . Our time has come to be happy.)

Being free from the curse seems as important as being free from the colonial yoke. This points to the idea that inner division preexists any external division. And in the novel, Mammeri explores the idea that otherness is not only associated with the French but also emerges from within. In the third chapter of the book, Mammeri takes us three centuries back to the origin of a feud between Arezki's family—Arezki is the descendant of Azouaou Wandlous—and that of his cousin Toudert, to whom Arezki's father has mortgaged his land. Two cousins, Hand-ou-Kaci and Azouaou Wandlous, were the cause of this conflict that degenerated into gruesome executions and conjured up a curse that continued in the present.

Indeed, like Jean and Taos Amrouche and Feraoun did, Mammeri also situates otherness within. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, inner otherness characterizes this body of literature, which is also introspective, despite the fact that it is fiction, not formal autobiographies. In Mammeri's novels, this inner otherness is represented by the violent conflicts that divide families into clans, a division that seems so extraordinary that it is construed as a suprahuman or a divine judgment: a curse. Inner division is also represented by bicultural characters such as Arezki (*Le sommeil du*

juste) and Bachir (*L'opium et le bâton*). For these characters, there is often a double tension: with the Berber world in which they were raised and with the French values they acquire in their education.

Malek Ouary

While the theme of the inner conflict is present throughout *Le sommeil du juste*, it is central in Malek Ouary's novel *Le grain dans la meule*. Malek Ouary was born in 1916 to a Christian family from the village of Ighil Ali, the same village as Jean and Taos Amrouche, both of whom he knew well. Ouary was a journalist at Radio-Alger and did extensive research on oral literature, starting in his village, then in Kabylia, and then moved on to studying Kabyle immigrants in France; during his research, he translated and collected many poems and tales. Later, as a journalist at the ORTF (French radio and television), Ouary continued his research on oral literature and published a collection of Kabyle poems and two other novels.[113]

Ouary's first novel, *Le grain dans la meule*, was inspired by an actual event. It tells the story of a blood feud in precolonial Kabylia and opens with a puzzling epigraph:

> "Si ton ennemi a faim, restaure-le, s'il a soif, abreuve-le, et, ce faisant, tu assembleras sur sa tête des charbons de feu." Saint-Paul aux Romains, XII, 20.
>
> (If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Romans 7:20.)

This reference to the Bible is perplexing, for its metatextuality suggests that it contains information that might lead the reader to better grasp the narrative to come. Also, the biblical epigraph recommends using guile and deceit against one's foe, a treatment that runs counter to Christian principles. The text thus starts with an ambiguity that dissipates with the unfolding of the novel, illustrated by the next line from the same biblical source, absent from Ouary's text but strongly implied by his overall narrative:

> "Ne te laisse point vaincre par le mal; mais travaille à vaincre le mal par le bien." Saint-Paul aux Romains, Rom XII, 21.
>
> (Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 7:21.)

This passage points to Da Tibouche Ath Qassy's strategy to rescue two families on the verge of destroying each other. The Ath Qassy and the Ath Sammer are caught in a potential vicious circle of killing and retaliation. At the origin of the feud is the murder of Da Tibouche's son, Akli, by Idhir-nath-Sammer. As the families are about to be united through the wedding of Idhir and Da Tibouche's daughter, Djigga, Idhir murders his future brother-in-law to restore the honor of his family. Da Tibouche Ath Qassy devises an original punishment that will obviate the requisite murder of Idhir—the customary response to such an offense—while restoring his family's honor. The solution Da Tibouche orchestrates also illustrates Saint Paul's plea to fight evil with good and represents a way to turn an old tradition based on elimination and exclusion into an original alternative, which is integrative. Indeed, Idhir will be given the option, which is difficult but an option nonetheless, to renounce his own family and be integrated into the family of the young man whom he murdered.

A banal incident is at the origin of the families' dispute. The families own neighboring land, and one day Seghir-ou-Tebbiche, a feebleminded worker who has been adopted into the Sammer family (as his full name, Seghir-ou-Tebbiche-nath-Sammer, reveals), takes the family's flock to the field; after he falls asleep, the animals destroy the cultivated field of the Ath Qassy. Akli Ath Qassy arrives on the scene and decides to punish the man by shaving his right mustache—a symbolic gesture that is a blow to his masculinity and, by extension, to that of his adopted family. Seghir naïvely laughs it off, even when, on his way back home, he is called "half-man." When Idhir-nath-Sammer sees Seghir, he construes this punishment as a familial humiliation that must be avenged. After murdering Akli, he leaves the village to escape retaliation and goes into exile in the South of Algeria.

In *Le grain dans la meule*, Ouary addresses the question of the Other (the Other outside but also inside Kabyle society), a recurrent theme throughout the novel. Otherness is present through notions such as the one and its double (Other), doubling up, union and fusion, disappearance, and rematerialization. The narrative, set in precolonial Algeria, opens like Feraoun's *Le fils du pauvre* does, with an outsider's impression of Kabylia: that of Messaoud. Messaoud, the companion whom Idhir meets in southern Algeria, discovers Idhir's home country while on a mission to see Saint Si Mohand. Messaoud declares:

> Je suis parvenu au seuil d'un monde fantastique: un chaos de ravins et de montagnes tout velus d'arbres et de buissons hirsutes. Un sentiment d'insécurité m'a assailli alors, et franchement, j'ai eu peur. Quel

étrange pays où chaque fourré semble recéler une menace, un danger! Et puis, tous ces bruits qui circulent, sournois, que l'écho reprend pour les rendre atténués.[114]

(I reached the threshold of a fantastic world: a chaos of ravines and mountains covered with trees and hirsute bushes. I was then seized by a feeling of insecurity, and frankly, I was scared. What a strange country where every shrubbery seems to conceal a threat, a danger! And then, all these noises around, deceitful, that the echo takes again to attenuate them.)

As it appears to him, the country is dangerous and boisterous and is a place of sound and fury, of secrecy and deceitfulness. Messaoud provides a fresh, new perspective on Kabylia that pinpoints some of the issues at the core of the narrative—namely, violence and danger. Clearly, Ouary's purpose is to provide comments and criticism of Kabylia through the perspective of outsiders, since the South of Algeria with which the novel opens is hardly described and not even named, while several of the characters there are familiar with Kabylia. Thus, Miloud, from whom Idhir rents a workshop, opposes Kabylia, the "country of olives" (*pays des olives*), to the South, the "country of dates" (*pays des dattes*):

Nos mœurs au pays des dattes n'ont pas la rudesse de celles du pays des olives, et puisque te voila chez nous, laisse-toi aller à la douceur de vivre. Oublie-la ta montagne.[115]

(Our mores in the country of dates do not have the harshness of that in the country of olives, and since you are here in our country, let yourself enjoy life. Forget your mountain.)

Kabylia is described as antinomic to the South, where life is sweet and agreeable, where people take pleasure in life and are kind to each other. Indeed, Miloud's comments follow his attempt to take away Idhir's rifle by suggesting that Idhir trade it in for Miloud's flute. But Idhir is not yet ready to trade the thrill of violence for music: "moi je sais une musique plus grisante encore, celle que l'on fait jaillir d'une flute de fer à tubes jumelés" (I know a music that is even more exhilarating, the one that comes out of an iron flute with twin tubes).[116] Unlike his compatriots from the South, Idhir is described as hot-blooded, violent, distrustful, somber, solitary, and engrossed in his own thoughts, which are directed toward the past. Indeed, Idhir is haunted by the murder he committed and is obsessed with the past, despite Miloud's begging him to live in the present: "profite de ta jeunesse,

la vie est courte. Le passé est mort, l'avenir est à Dieu. Vis donc le présent" (take advantage of your youth; life is short. The past is dead; the future belongs to God. So live the present).[117] Obviously, one of Ouary's objectives is to articulate a constructive criticism of Kabyle mores and shortcomings from an outsider's perspective and to suggest an alternative that could shake centuries-old codes of behavior.

However, while the Other provides a different perspective and an enticing alternative model, the idea is not to mimic the Other, for the change has to come from inside. In *Le grain dans la meule*, metamorphosis and renewal are dominant themes that are illustrated by rich allegories. For instance, exiled in the South, Idhir visits Moha, a soothsayer, who tells him the strange parable of a dead man going to a cemetery and facing a tomb from which emerges another dead person. They kiss and combine into one person. Then they part, one going to the village, the other to the tomb, but no one knows who is in the tomb and who is not. Neither one nor the other, says the soothsayer, for a new being has emerged, who is both:

L'un pénètre dans la tombe
Tandis que l'autre s'en va
Vers le pays des vivants.
Lequel s'est endormi?
Lequel s'est éveillé?
Ni l'un, ni l'autre peut-être
Mais un nouveau personnage
Qui tient de l'un et de l'autre.[118]

(One enters into the tomb
While the other leaves
Toward the world of the living
Which one went to rest?
Which one woke up?
Neither one maybe
But a new person
Who takes after one and the other.)

This intriguing parable represents Idhir's transformation. After he runs away from a certain death, Idhir, tired of fleeing and homesick, finally surrenders to his fate and returns to his village to die at the hands of Akli's brothers and father. Incidentally, the village is once again represented as the ultimate refuge, in life and death. While away from Thighilt (small hill), his village, Idhir could not find peace or rest and finally prefers to return and

die in his village than live away from it. But, as the soothsayer predicted, he will reemerge as another man. Da Tibouche, the victim's father, calls his sons around the family's millstone and reveals his plan: instead of executing Idhir as their honor calls for, they will "assimilate" him into their family, like a grain in a millstone, hence the novel's title. Idhir is finally presented with an excruciating choice: either he renounces his current identity—who he is, his family, his name, and his past—and becomes an Ath Qassy (thereby replacing Akli and marrying Akli's sister, as originally planned), or he dies. This solution leaves no one unaffected but opens a crack in a deep-rooted code of honor and saves many lives.

Idhir's transformation represents a constructive way to tackle Berbers' inner division, an enduring predicament in Berber societies (see the articles Mammeri published in *Aguedal*). Through the character of Idhir, Ouary suggests embracing difference rather than fighting it. In the novel, both families are destined to integrate difference; Idhir becomes a full member of his victim's family, while the victim's family has to integrate Idhir as a full member of their family. The integration of difference that Ouary proposes does not require relinquishing oneself altogether; even Idhir, while sacrificing his social, personal, and familial identity, remains Idhir at some level, for as the parable tells, the two men combine to form one individual. In the end, *Le grain dans la meule* reveals that foreignness is always embedded in one's own self, as shown by the feebleminded worker who has been assimilated to the Ath Sammer family and who, incidentally, as an integral member of the family, is at the origin of the feud. This character is, finally, the epitome of otherness, whose very life was pointing to the solution all along.

What of the difference with the other Other—namely, the French? *Le grain dans la meule* does not address this issue, since it is set before the French conquest, but Ouary tackles this question elsewhere. He seems to prescribe the same treatment as in *Le grain dans la meule*, except that inwardly the spirit of resistance has to be cultivated. This is reminiscent of Jugurtha's strength of mind as described by Amrouche in his essay on the legendary Berber figure. Jugurtha would mimic the language, customs, and beliefs of the Other, yet "at the very moment when the conquest seems complete, Jugurtha awakens and breaks away from what seemed to be a done deal." Ouary's prescription, applicable in a time of danger—as with Idhir, who escapes death—represents a sort of survival philosophy for the Berbers and a way out of their perennial internal conflicts.

The philosophy of *Le grain dans la meule* and that of Jugurtha, as articulated by Amrouche, was adopted by Malek Ouary himself. The integration process was a traumatic experience that took place during the writer's

French schooling. While attending a French school, he felt dispossessed of his culture and Berber language: "I was sent there to unlearn my language in order to learn another one."[119] He was asked to renounce who he was in order to gain access to French culture—it is similar to what Bourdieu, speaking of Mammeri's experience, calls the symbolic murder of the father.[120] But Ouary was able to overcome the denial of his identity: once in possession of the imposed French culture, he used the acquired tools to return to his own culture with a "vengeance." Ouary's immense effort to collect and salvage Kabyle oral culture attests to his commitment to his culture of origin. Ancillary to the recovery of his Berber heritage is Ouary's career as a novelist in French.[121] In the end, one might see Ouary's career as an illustration of the parable of the man in the cemetery, where two bodies embracing each other create a new being. Finally, *Le grain dans la meule* is the narrative that goes furthest in examining difference that appears irreconcilable, for it boldly proposes a dramatic resolution in integration, though resistance is embedded in it.

Conclusion

This chapter is a brief survey of texts by the first Berber francophone writers from the 1940s through the early 1960s. This chapter also explores the primary (Algerian Berber) concern of their literary work: the relationship to oneself and to the other/Other, and the ways to deal with it. Various social and historic factors influenced this group of writers concurrently with the emergence of Berber consciousness, thereby contributing to the consolidation of the latter. For the writers examined in this chapter, biculturality, hybridity, and multiple consciousness are both a blessing and a curse. In their writing, they set off on a quest for subjectivity, though the use of the autobiographical, or personal, mode is difficult for these writers to assume—as a specific kind of subject position—and to execute. The pain and failure of Taos Amrouche, the literary silence of Jean Amrouche, and the reluctance of Mouloud Feraoun all point to the impossibility of accession to the kind of individuality that is the foundation of Western ideology and notions of subjectivity as such. Indeed, self-knowledge for these writers is always intertwined with the other, whether it is the community or the Other (the French). This situation entails both a sense of alienation and familiarity.

In these writers' narratives, a common feeling of loss is evident through the valorization of an idealized place, moment, solution, or feeling. For Mammeri, it is the idealized village, Tasga (Taasast) or Tala (the source, in *L'opium et le bâton*); Jean Amrouche and Feraoun valorize spirituality and

childhood; Ouary finds solace in the philosophy of integration and transformation; and most of Taos Amrouche's literary work is devoted to seeking pure love. The perfect time, place, feeling, or resolution that these writers reflect upon is associated with a longing for unity and harmony, where tensions are absent. This unity, whether real or imagined, cannot be recovered, and the sense of its loss is encompassed by the fear of losing one's mother language, which is believed to be on the verge of extinction. Thus, the support of these writers for the Berber language—for its recognition, national place, preservation, and modernization—was a labor of love and brought about that ephemeral feeling of unity recovered, a feeling experienced by Taos Amrouche when she sang.

The particular position of these writers, in addition to their being Berber and writing in French, not only entailed a harsh regimen of self-scrutiny, but it also left them open to a cynical and critical readership in Algeria. Francophone literature has been regarded with suspicion since its inception, and during the Algerian War, Mohammed El Gharbi, the FLN delegate, even declared Algerian francophone writers to be disconnected from their people, and their exclusive French education to be antipopular and antinational. He added that they are torn between loyalty to their culture and loyalty to an anonymous fatherland.[122] For Berber writers, loyalty to their land is not in doubt, which is precisely the problem—and so consider, then, how their loyalty to the Berber regions is construed as a threat to the unity of the nation as a whole—that is, Algeria. Thus, Berber francophone writers were viewed twice as suspiciously as other writers were, for besides their multiple consciousness, as discussed in this chapter, they speak of a distinct region that possesses a language different from that of the majority; consequently, all the writers of this group encountered suspicion from one side or the other, or from all sides.

Feraoun's pacifism was construed as unpatriotic by his compatriots.[123] In a recent article, one author takes this charge further and argues that Feraoun should be considered not an Algerian writer but a French writer.[124] After a talk Jean Amrouche gave during a conference in Paris in 1956, a gathering of intellectuals against the continuation of the war in Algeria, he was fired from the ORTF. Subsequently, many of his literary friends let him down, and even his French in-laws rejected him.[125] The plot against Mammeri's *La colline oubliée*, as noted earlier, stigmatized the writer and was a problem that resurfaced in 1980, when Mammeri was openly defamed by the Algerian newspaper *El Moudjahid*, which accused him of lacking patriotism during the Algerian War.[126]

As for Ouary, despite the fact that the plot of *Le grain dans la meule* is

based on a real event, for some the conclusion of the novel was un-Algerian. His critics claimed that since Ouary was a Christian, his solution could only be a Christian one. Mohamed Iflicène, who adapted the novel to the screen, changed the ending, because he thought that this kind of revenge could not be found in Kabylia.[127] As for Taos Amrouche, her difficulties were at the level of publication. Jean Giono and her brother Jean Amrouche prevented her novels from being published, though she was also profoundly shocked and hurt when she heard that her songs were construed by some of her compatriots as missionary songs.[128]

Revisiting early North African literature and recognizing the existence of a Berber literary tradition is imperative, for it reveals an insufficiently known aspect of North African or Algerian identity that is intricate, heterogeneous, and dialectical. This is not a new idea. Anthropologist Tassadit Yacine asserts that these writers occupy a particular place in Algerian literature, and she explores their specificity in her book *Chacal ou la ruse des dominés*, wherein she argues that these writers' distinctiveness lies in the fact that they were required to speak several languages and interact at different social (status) levels and at different cultural levels.[129] They also share "une structure sociale incarnée par Chacal" (a social structure embodied by the Jackal) that they have interiorized since childhood and that unconsciously reemerges in their actions and in their work.[130] The jackal in oral Berber literature personifies a ruse when he is weak and voluntary ambiguity when he is in a position of power.[131] In addition, the jackal is often the link between two antagonistic positions:

> Chacal est appelé à servir de lien entre deux pôles antagoniques. A l'intersection de deux ordres (réel et symbolique), de deux corps sociaux (dominant et dominé), Chacal renvoie à la logique du seuil, du carrefour, du croisement des chemins et de l'union des sexes dans l'univers de la magie. . . . Incarnation des dominés, Chacal peut jouer à l'infini avec le pouvoir et ses attentes d'où sa capacité de séduction poussée à l'extrême.[132]
>
> (The Jackal plays the link between two antagonistic poles. At the junction of two worlds (real and symbolic) and two social groups (dominant and dominated), the Jackal is associated with the idea of the threshold, the junction, the crossroads, and the union of the sexes in the world of magic. . . . Symbol of the dominated, the Jackal can play endlessly with the power in place and its expectations, hence his tremendous capacity of seduction.)

Reading this description of the jackal, one cannot help but think of Jean and Taos Amrouche, Feraoun, Mammeri, and Ouary. The "cultural ruse," as Yacine calls it, the ambiguity and resistance of these writers, deserve to be explored further in relationship to their world of reference, as Yacine does in her study. Further exploration of this Berber literary tradition will enhance our comprehension of the past and current literature from the region.

3

Of Berbers and Beurs, France and Algeria

The Struggle for Identity and Rights, 1970–1990

Paradoxes

The Beur and the Berber movements emerged within three years of each other, the former in France and the latter in Algeria. Each movement coalesced around a single historical moment: the Beur March for equality (and against racism) in France in 1983, and the Berber Spring uprising in Algeria in 1980. While one might expect the two movements to have shared leadership or to have had other connections, they in fact developed separately and shared very little. They were driven by different motivations and objectives, some almost contradicting others.

However, they could not be entirely unrelated given the population that comprised them, for these two events concerned, and are meaningful to, the same people, living on opposite sides of the Mediterranean Sea, namely the Kabyles and their French-born descendants. On the French front, there were Kabyle militants, whose militancy could be traced back in part to the early Algerian immigration to France, and the children of Algerian (especially Kabyle) immigrants born in France and having very little, if any, link to these militants. The latter felt the need to claim a political and social space in France; this energy flowed over into the Beur movement and its peak moment, the 1983 March. In Algeria, the Berbers of Kabylia mounted a historically significant uprising and alerted the world to the Berber plight.

In this chapter, I initially focus on the Berber movement and its development on both sides of the Mediterranean. To this end, I consider the Berbers in Paris and the French *banlieue* (the immigrant suburb), where in the late 1960s and early 1970s new generations of Berbers developed Amazigh identity via research and publication projects. Amazigh means

"free person," and Berber people use this term to refer to themselves, underlining their independence and their rejection of the imposed term "Berber." Through research and interpretation of texts and poetry, the Berbers presented and recorded a distinct history and culture, as well as an oral tradition that had otherwise been ignored or dismissed. Here, I trace the steps taken by these Berber research groups to show the connection between their intellectual activities and social activism in Algeria, which eventually led to the Berber Spring protests in April 1980.

This initial Berber mobilization in France and Algeria coexisted and overlapped with the Beur movement, if only because it was composed of the descendants of Berber and North African immigrants. To explore this dynamic, in a second section, I discuss the Beur movement and its development, with special attention to the way that Beur youth of Berber origin articulated a new literary space, with no particular help or link to the work or struggle of their elders. I briefly examine this generational gap through the literary texts of some "Berber-Beur" writers, notably Mehdi Lallaoui, Tassadit Imache, Nacer Kettane, Mounsi, Akli Tadjer, Sakinna Boukhedenna, and Ferrudja Kessas. In their texts, they synthesize the Beur experience, claiming an in-between space in France and providing insight into their particular appreciation of their Berber origins.

Finally, it is important to consider that although both movements evolved around the same time and their memberships were mainly Berber (Algeria) or partially Berber (France), they never fully combined or merged, for these two movements are inherently different and to a certain extent seem to be opposed in their objectives. After all, while the Berber movement and its legacy today extols cultural and linguistic difference, the Beur movement was for the most part a movement that strove for recognition from the French government and the French people as a whole. In other words, one movement tends toward difference, if not separatism, while the other is about inclusion, if not assimilation. Nonetheless, I contend that there are aspects of cross-fertilization between these two seemingly independent movements. I discuss in particular the emergence of the Kabyle modern song, especially the emergence of pop singers such as Idir, who is a living link between the Berbers and the Beurs.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. It primarily provides a brief historical and cultural account of the Berber and Beur movements, which come together via the modern Kabyle song. This chapter also presents a brief review of the literary movement called Beur literature, which is a product of this period. But because the Berber and Beur movements emerged and

developed within a specific historical and sociological context, which is imperative to take into account, this chapter is principally grounded in history and sociology, both of which provide the necessary background to comprehend and explore the cultural and literary developments of the period.

The Berber Movement in France and Algeria

> Dans l'histoire contemporaine de l'Algérie, depuis la fondation des premiers partis nationalistes jusqu'à nos jours, les revendications berbéristes se sont toujours conjuguées avec le nationalisme le plus intransigeant, les options politiques démocratiques et sociales les plus radicales et, enfin, avec une option laïciste timide dans ses premières formulations, qui ira en s'affermissant au gré des débats politiques de l'Algérie indépendante.[1]
>
> (In the contemporary history of Algeria, since the foundation of the first nationalist parties until today, the Berberist claims have always been combined with the most intransigent nationalism, the most radical democratic and social political options and finally with a timid secular option at first, which will strengthen with the political debates in independent Algeria.)

The emergence and development of the Berber movement can be dated roughly to the late 1960s and early 1970s, when a new generation of Berbers started to research and work on Amazigh identity. This development was mediated by a number of factors. Without revisiting all the episodes that took place during or before the war of liberation that were significant for the Kabylia region since Algerian independence (e.g., the Soummam Congress in 1956 or the Berberist crisis of 1949[2]), suffice it to say that suspicion in Algeria has always fallen on the Berbers, and this suspicion is marked by a continual denial of their cause and place in Algeria and in its political and civic life. This situation was aggravated further by the failed armed rebellion led by former Kabyle revolutionary leader Hocine Aït Ahmed in 1963–64, against the FLN, the revolutionary Algerian ruling party, and its one-party system. The Kabylia region, as the stage of this rebellion, gave the revolt a separatist dimension, though Aït Ahmed himself claimed not to harbor separatist intentions.[3] The region was subjected to a campaign of brutal repression and was further ostracized by the government, rendering its population even more suspect.[4]

Arabization

The 1962 policy of Arabization was a significant factor in the marginalization of Kabylia and the Algerian Berber population. The goals of Arabization were to integrate the new nation, consolidate power, and demonstrate unity with the other newly independent nations of North Africa. In Algeria, the government wanted to replace the language of the colonizer, French, with Arabic as the official national language. To that end, the Algerian constitution established Islam as the official religion and Arabic as the official language. It was not until 2002 that the constitution was amended and Berber was recognized as a second national language. The process of Arabization—which was to be implemented using Fusha, or Modern Standard Arabic, which few Algerians spoke and read—was intended to permeate all aspects of everyday life. Moreover, this process was controlled by the state and was directed especially toward public programs in the educational sector, official services, and media, especially radio and television. The result was a failure, because the majority of Algerians, who understood only colloquial Arabic or Berber, were not able to participate in civic life. As a consequence, the process of Arabization, which was often accompanied by a program of Islamization that was actually the enforcement of orthodox Islam to eradicate traditional North African Muslim practices, was felt by many to be an imposition from above, so negative public reaction and dissent followed.[5]

In his article on Arabization in Algeria, Gilbert Grandguillaume claims that two poles of resistance developed against Arabization. One came from the francophone speakers, who were immediately accused of being in "the party of France"; the other came from people who spoke Berber, especially in Kabylia. Major intellectual Algerian figures, such as the renowned novelist and writer Kateb Yacine and the playwright Abdelkader Alloula, also expressed their opposition.[6] Several years later, Kateb Yacine reiterated his opposition with stronger words, stating that the deepest alienation for an Algerian is not to think that he is French but that he is Arab. Yacine asserts,

> L'aliénation la plus profonde, ce n'est plus de se croire français, mais de se croire arabe. Or il n'y a pas de race arabe, ni de nation arabe. Il y a une langue sacrée, la langue du Coran dont les dirigeants se servent pour masquer au peuple sa propre identité![7]
>
> (The deepest alienation is not to think of oneself as French, but to think of oneself as Arab. There is no Arab race, no Arab nation. There

is a sacred language, the language of the Koran that is used by the leaders to hide from the people their own identity!)

In his article, Grandguillaume also contends that the resulting Algerian conscience developed negatively—that is, as *ressentiment* against the French entity and identity—and, worse, in opposition to political and linguistic pluralism in Algeria.[8] In his vivid testimonial about his high school years, professor and Berber militant Hend Sadi recalled how his Arabic-speaking teachers tried to "Arabize" the students, condemning the French language and dismissing Berber. This awkward situation and the way these teachers—who had been recruited by the Algerian government from Egypt and other Arab countries—appropriated the Algerian War (though they did not participate in it) bred discontent and led many of the students to Berber militancy. Sadi writes:

> Au lycée, les enseignants d'arabe, "baathistes" ou "frères musulmans" pour la plupart, s'acquittaient de leur mission avec zèle. Ils s'employaient à nous arabiser. . . . Il nous fallait en conséquence apprendre à aimer la langue arabe que nous devions faire notre, mais aussi abandonner le Kabyle, un "dialecte" sans valeur et renier l'identité berbère, un concept "créé par le colonialisme" aux dires de nos professeurs. . . . Pour légitimer leur discours au lycée, les arabisants l'inscrivaient dans des diatribes anti-françaises. . . . La légèreté avec laquelle ils nous marginalisaient, leur volonté de s'approprier un combat auquel ils n'avaient pas participé, le sans-gêne avec lequel ils accaparaient une libération que nous avions payée au prix du sang, tout cela nous heurtait profondément.[9]
>
> (In high school, the Arabic teachers, most of them Baathists or Muslim Brothers, discharged their duties with zeal. They strove to Arabize us. . . . We had to learn to love the Arabic language that we should make our own, but also give up Kabyle, a worthless "dialect," and disown our Berber identity, a concept "invented by colonialism," according to our teachers. . . . To legitimize their discourse at school, the Arabic teachers framed it as part of anti-French diatribes . . . How careless they were about marginalizing us. Their desire to take over a fight they had not fought, the flippancy with which they arrogated a liberation for which we had spilled our blood, all this deeply offended us.)

In pursuing this new policy, the national board of education discontinued the position of chair of Berber at the University of Algiers in October 1962.

In response, beginning in 1965–66, Berber students in Kabylia, Algiers, and Paris began to gather in groups to work on Berber cultural, archival, and pedagogical projects. As with the earlier nationalist movement, France once again constituted an important gathering place to research and organize the Berber renaissance. Moreover, these clusters of intellectuals and militants could count on the fact that the Kabyle community living in France was available, engaged, and beyond the reach of the repressive Algerian state. It follows, then, that political claims were enmeshed with cultural issues.

The objective of Arabization was not simply to eradicate the language of the former colonizer (French was the language of communication and culture) but also to eradicate the Berber language and references to Algeria's pre-Islamic past. Thus, this process of Arabization not only addressed administrative offices, education, and media but also included the names of places, streets, and other things. Francis Gandon discusses the Arabization of the urban environment in Algeria and gives numerous examples of it.[10] The names of public places, streets, stores, and all kinds of sign boards were changed if they had a local, cultural, or historical referent that was not Arab; each was given an Arabic name with a new connotation that accorded with the current political context.[11] All names linked to Berber identity or reminiscent of the colonial past were literally rubbed out. Gandon gives several examples of this nationalist cleansing. A store called Iziri (the Morning Star, which is linked to the Punico-Berber cult of Ishtar) was renamed Leïla; the boutique Eucalyptus was renamed Rose; the street Massinissa (named after the Numidian king) was renamed Ben-Boulaïd, after a martyr of the Algerian independence. The new designations tended to be derived from references to the Orient; associations with notions such as happiness, rectitude, and beauty; poetic images and names such as Leïla and Schéherazade; and cultural references such as Antar (an Arab warrior and poet of the sixth century).[12]

In addition to the process of Arabization, other factors contributed to the rising indignation toward President Boumediène's dictatorial regime. In 1970 revolutionary Kabyle leader Krim Belkacem was assassinated by the military security apparatus (SM, or *sécurité militaire*) in Frankfurt. In 1973 the Berber course taught by Mouloud Mammeri at the University of Algiers, a course whose existence had been permitted by the authorities only with great reluctance, was canceled. It was a time when songs by the famous Kabyle singer Slimane Azem were forbidden and the transmission strength of the only Kabyle radio channel in Algeria, la chaîne 2, was continually reduced. Young people were arrested and charged by the government,

often simply because they held Berber documentation.[13] The 1970s in Algeria were generally perceived as a time characterized by arbitrary abuse of power and brutality—in short, dictatorship—and, most of all, the repression and denial of Berber identity.

The showdown between the Berber population of Kabylia and the Algerian regime came about mainly through two incidents. In 1974 the Algerian ruling party, the FLN (National Liberation Front), organized La fête des cerises (the Cherry Festival) in Larba Nat Iraten, a Kabyle town in the mountains near Tizi Ouzou. More than five thousand spectators, all Kabyles, gathered expecting Kabyle singers but were presented instead with Arabic-speaking performers. A massive protest followed, which was met with violence by the *gendarmes*, the Algerian national police. Several *gendarmes* were killed and more than fifty spectators were wounded.[14]

The other significant event took place in 1977 during the Algerian Cup football (soccer) national championship tournament. The Kabyle team, the JSK (Jeunesse Sportive de Kabylie), which was and remains a symbol of Berber identity, was to play for the Algerian Cup in Algiers. The stadium was full, and President Boumediène attended the event. Nearly all of the spectators, possibly 90 percent of them, were Kabyle, and the game became a venue for the expression of the Berber cause. Numerous incidents took place during the game. The president was booed (youths chanted "down with Boumediène" and "down with dictatorship") and the singing of the national anthem was disrupted, as was the minute of silence for the martyrs of the revolution. The president had to leave the premises using an underground passageway because of the tension in the stadium. After the JSK won the game, the crowd celebrated the victory and marched toward the center of Algiers carrying banners written in Tifinagh (the Berber script).[15] At both events, for the first time, a new word appeared and was chanted by the spectators: Imazighen (a term long used by the indigenous people to refer to themselves). The Berber movement took several years to mature and give birth to what is called the Berber Spring. The very use of the word Imazighen attests to the success of the underground work done by the pioneer figures of the Kabyle cause.[16]

"One Only Arabizes What Is Not Arab": The Berber Academy and Beyond

In the late 1960s the cultural association L'Académie berbère (the Berber Academy) in Paris was for several years a center for activities around the Berber question. These activities included hosting discussions and debates,

publishing, creating militancy, and raising Berber awareness. Its actual impact was never precisely assessed, but no one can deny the awareness raising that the academy accomplished within the Berber community in France and, by extension, in Algeria and elsewhere. The history of this association is intertwined with the political and social life of many Algerians at the time, and revisiting its history, along with that of certain publications at the time, gives us a better understanding of the Berber cultural scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Berber Academy, created in 1966, is generally associated with Mohand-Aarav Bessaoud, who wrote a poignant and polemical narrative that traces the creation and influence of the Berber Academy, which he created with a small group of individuals in Paris.[17] Bessaoud, a short-tempered and ardent Berber militant, was also a charismatic figure who dedicated himself to promoting Berber culture and communal identity. He went underground in 1955 as part of the nationalist resistance during the war of independence and later served as an officer in the Algerian Army. Bessaoud's difficult war experience is recounted in *Heureux les martyrs qui n'ont rien vu*, published in 1963, wherein he reveals that the Kabyle revolutionary leader Abane Ramdane did not die fighting, as was generally said, but was assassinated by Boussouf, the head of the Algerian MALG (predecessor of the Military Security). In 1963 Bessaoud joined Aït Ahmed in his rebellion against Algeria's one-party system. His subsequent book, *Le FFS espoir et trahison*, published in 1966, relates his disappointment with Aït Ahmed and his newly created political party of opposition, the FFS (Front of Socialist Forces). Bessaoud accused the revolutionary leader of turning his back on political pluralism and dismissing the Berber question. Bessaoud's underground activist life was difficult, so he left for France, where he engaged in Berber activism in a more open public political space.

The famous singer and writer Taos Amrouche hosted the first Berber association meeting at her Paris residence in 1966. A small group of diverse personalities, including the pharmacist Mohand-Saïd Hanouz, army officer Abdelkader Rahmani, and professor Mohamed Arkoun, came together to form the association.[18] To avoid any misconceptions about the nature of the association, it was called Académie berbère d'échanges et de recherches culturelles.[19] For Bessaoud, the main objective of the association was to raise Berber consciousness, so from 1966 to 1972, he walked up and down the streets of Paris, visiting cafés where Kabyles met, in order to discuss Berber issues and spread the "Berber word."[20] The association was officially authorized in March 1967 and was promptly attacked from different sides, while disagreements regarding its future role emerged from within.[21] Some

members aspired to a less populist, more intellectual association, but Bessaoud remained convinced that a grassroots presence was key. Of the founding members, only Hanouz continued to support him.

In 1969, after overcoming numerous difficulties, Bessaoud organized the first Berber concert, which was a great success.[22] The event, which launched the new Berber Academy (Agraw Imazighen), marked a turning point in Berber cultural life in France. The new Berber Academy activists were older, popular political militants who had a strong following among the Kabyle immigrant population in and around Paris. Bessaoud continued to address the working-class Berber constituency, and with the help of students and factory workers, he published a bilingual monthly bulletin (in French and Berber) called *Imazighène*. The bulletin (thirty issues were published) was distributed throughout the diaspora and in Kabylia, especially among students, who passed it around among themselves. It provoked many discussions and debates, and its influence on the Berber youth in Algeria is notable. In 1970 Bessaoud received thousands of letters of support from Algeria and thousands more from Morocco—the latter were seized by the Moroccan security services.[23]

The word Imazighen and what it conveyed in terms of Berber awareness could not be ignored. The bulletin's main concerns were the ancient history of North Africa and the defense of the Amazigh language. The bulletin popularized Berber history, including major Berber heroes that are now well known, such as Massinissa, Jugurtha, and Kahina. This history was essentially directed toward a large public, especially Berber youth. While the bulletin's radicalism and sometimes virulent content led some to dismiss it or to disassociate themselves from it, the impression it left on students in Algeria was unforgettable. Saïd Khelil recounts "the emotional charge" of simply using the Tifinagh alphabet.[24] For Khelil and his companions, it was "the proof that we actually existed" and a "discovery," and to know that their roots went so far back in history conveyed "a marvelous dimension."[25]

Parallel to this militant activity, whose discourse would eventually mature and become more flexible, with the development of sensitivity toward other cultural minorities, an academic movement also emerged that was best realized in the activities of the Groupe d'Études Berbères at the University of Paris VIII. The Groupe d'Études Berbères started to function in 1973 and fully emerged with the adoption by the university of a program of courses on the Berber language and civilization taught by professor M'barek Redjala.[26]

Even before the official formation and implementation of a Berber program of study, an informal Berber group was active at the university. For

example, two workers and militants from the Berber Academy, Mustapha Bounab and Belkacem Idjekiouane, made presentations on the Berber alphabet with the help and support of Professor Georges Lapassade, a French leftist intellectual. Thus, the initiative of the Berber presence at the University of Paris VIII came from the working class, a feat linked to the democratic and innovative nature of the University of Paris VIII, an experimental university where education was made accessible to all, especially to workers.[27] This last aspect of the Berber movement at the university was more academic and more moderate in its expression, focusing on scientific methodology, language pedagogy, literature, and civilization.[28] The Berber group at the university published a range of periodical and didactic tools to support this program. The Groupe d'Études Berbères (GEB) produced a bulletin called *Le Bulletin d'Études Berbères*, replaced in 1978 by the journal *Tisuraf* (Small Steps). The GEB was influential in the emergence of political and cultural activism in the Berber movement of 1980, for the Berberist movement discourse had evolved and earned acceptance and credibility with its admission into the academic world.

Two Influential Figures of the Berber Movement: Taos Amrouche and Mouloud Mammeri

Mouloud Mammeri and Taos Amrouche (discussed in the previous chapter, dedicated to the first Berber francophone writers) resurface in the Berber movement. They were much more than just writers; they were charismatic and intellectual figures who played important though differing roles in the vast popular movement that provoked the Kabylia uprising in 1980. They operated inside and outside the Kabyle community, as they belonged to the social elite and inhabited a separate academic world.[29]

Mammeri was already an accomplished novelist and scholar in the 1970s.[30] In 1969 he published *Les isefra: Poèmes de si mohand-ou-mhand*, a collection of poems by the Kabyle bard Si Mohand ou-Mhand that Mammeri had translated into French. This work had a major impact on the self-awareness of Kabyles. Mammeri later published a Berber grammar book, and his Berber courses at the University of Algiers were especially influential. According to Ouerdane, young Kabyles enrolled by the hundreds in his course as a result of the groundwork done by the Berber Academy, which had promoted Berber identity.[31] When Mammeri's course was cancelled in 1973, the linguistic and cultural Berber affirmation moved from the university to the street.[32] Writing of his student years, Oussalem declared that the importance of the framework created by Mammeri's Berber course

was that "it was both a place of gathering and collective affirmation and a place of discovery and learning about our culture and language."[33] Within the framework of this course, multiple contacts were made, and students learned Berber script and were exposed to Berber dialects and literature. The course was both a discovery and a search for legitimacy.[34] However, when Mammeri came to the University of Tizi Ouzou to speak about his new collection of ancient poems, *Poèmes kabyles anciens*, he was forbidden access to the university by the Algerian authorities; this triggered the riots of the Berber Spring.

Taos Amrouche was also a major figure in Berber culture. She was a significant novelist (though, for complex reasons, not established or recognized) and singer of traditional Berber songs (collected from her mother) who gave these songs a particular dimension, singing them and recording them as part of a patrimony on the brink of extinction. Amrouche endowed these songs with international prestige and provided them with a place among world music. Singing outside of her community to foreign audiences in France and elsewhere (Spain, Morocco, and Senegal), she coupled her recitals with a new discourse about authenticity and the danger of extinction that her Berber heritage faced—a patrimony that, she reminded her audience, also belongs to the world, and thus must be saved and protected.[35] Amrouche's role, then, was tightly connected to the recognition of the Berber situation and to the cultural and historical mission of its supporters. Taos Amrouche also addressed her compatriots through radio shows in France from the 1950s through the early 1960s.[36] She was the host of several shows in French and Kabyle on the Radio Télévision Française (RTF).[37] One of her shows was aptly called "A d n emmekti tamurt" (Let's remember Kabylia) with presenter Kamel Daoud and the famous Kabyle singer Kamal Hamadi. The hosts would discuss and analyze Kabyle poems and tales. The Kabyle diaspora in France was eager to listen to Taos Amrouche's radio shows, which surely contributed to renewed pride and interest in Kabyle identity.

La chaîne 2

La chaîne 2 was the sole Kabyle radio channel in Algeria during this period. It was founded after the Second World War when the ELAK (émissions en langue arabe et kabyle) were created within Radio-Alger, which had been broadcasting in French since 1925.[38] According to Dehbia Abrous, at first the Kabyle programming was a prized aspect of the station's format, though it was broadcast only three hours a week. The station's Kabyle programs

were directed especially toward women and aimed at drawing attention to the "civilizing mission" of France in Algeria at a time when the nationalist movement was starting to toughen.[39] According to writer and journalist Malek Ouary, who worked at the radio station, much improvisation occurred during the creation and implementation of the programs. At first, the station staff copied French radio in their programming. However, little by little, the radio channel became the center of intense intellectual activity and "attracted everything that could constitute an intellectual life."[40] Much energy was spent collecting, adapting, creating, and translating Kabyle oral culture, since the Kabyle tradition was mainly oral. Malek Ouary's own contribution to this effort is widely acknowledged.[41]

The radio station's audience grew rapidly when battery-operated portable radios became available, in the mid-1950s. The channel's role and influence on Kabyle society was significant, as Abdelmadjib Bali, who spent twenty years working with the radio station, argues. Because of the social conservatism of Kabyle society, direct radio access to the closed world of women was at first considered quite scandalous by many Kabyles. The presenters were careful not to offend their listeners; for example, presenters would first announce a "light" song before playing it.[42] Bali argues that the intrusion of the radio into people's homes and intimate domestic spaces contributed to a profound cultural transformation, for "the fathers of the Kabyle radio . . . defied prejudice and boldly tackled risky themes, such as women's emancipation and their right to education and work."[43] Therefore, Bali argues, the radio channel progressively became omnipresent in people's lives and propelled a traditional society into the modern world.

After Algerian independence, the RTA (Algerian Radio and Television) designated one channel, Chaîne 1, to broadcast in Arabic; another, Chaîne 2, to broadcast in Kabyle; and a third, Chaîne 3, to broadcast in French. From the 1970s on, the transmission strength of Chaîne 2 was constantly reduced and the station faced discrimination.[44] During the Arabization period, some questioned its very existence and wanted to cut it altogether.[45] On the other hand, with the channel under official control, the government had access to a population that would otherwise be out of reach, for, as one critic stated, "The government has indeed no other way to communicate with a population whose rate of literacy barely exceeds 50% and who understand neither French nor Arabic . . . Channel 2 allows the government to maintain contact with this population and to convey political messages to it."[46] The station was maintained, but its broadcasting hours and the range of its radio transmitter were further reduced, all of which was known as the "translation of a policy of suffocation."[47] Of course, people were outraged,

for the channel was the only cultural space dedicated to broadcasting in the Kabyle language, and it had a large audience.[48]

The New Kabyle Song and Other Cultural Forms

While intellectuals, activists, and militants articulated a cause and strived to express cultural claims, singers and musicians made the defense of the Berber culture a lived reality. Linking the past and the present, and working at the conscious and unconscious levels, their songs resonated with people's concerns and thus largely carried and popularized the Berber cause. Because the singers used an oral medium in the Kabyle language, they had unmediated access to the people. In the end, the commitment of intellectuals, activists, and artists in their defense of Berber culture overlapped and converged.

The "new Kabyle song," as it is known, is a successful blend of old repertoires mixed with modern technology and contemporary politics. It was heralded by Ben Mohammed, a young poet who worked during the 1970s to modernize Kabyle music by diversifying its themes, structure, and composition. He wrote the lyrics for Idir's hit song "A Vava Inuva" in 1973 (among many other famous song lyrics), and he is commonly associated with the foundation of the new Kabyle music scene.[49] Anthropologist Jane Goodman goes further, arguing that Ben Mohammed and Idir's work developed "a new vision of Berber identity": "The genre that Idir and Ben launched . . . provides a compelling example of the use of intergeneric and intertextual relationships to develop a new vision of Berber identity. It does so through a creative intermingling of genres, blending the harmonies, instruments, performance modalities, and technologies associated with folk rock with rhythms, melodies, and texts drawn from Berber village repertoires."[50] And indeed the Kabyle song played an essential role in the renewal of Berber identity and rights claims in Algeria and also in France.

The few years that preceded 1980 were active in terms of cultural activities, which in Algeria took place mainly within schools and universities. These years were so active that sociologist Brahim Salhi linked Berber identity formation to the sociological situation of its leaders, people who had access to education and modernization and who had the benefit of public service jobs.[51] Certainly, school played an important role in the cultural and linguistic awareness of the younger generations of Kabyles. It was and is a place where the youth of Kabylia experienced the rejection of their mother language, with incidents involving prohibitions on singing in Berber in a choir or in a stage play. The youth also had access to clandestine

copies of journals and documents that reaffirmed their Berber identity. At the University of Algiers in 1968, while Mouloud Mammeri was teaching his Berber course, a cultural group, Cercle Culturel Berbère, was created by students. From this group emerged the journal *Taftilt* (Light). Outside the university, another journal, *Itij* (Sun), was produced that used the Tifinagh alphabet. This period was also rich in creative productions, such as dramas written and performed in Kabyle. Writer and intellectual Kateb Yacine encouraged the Kabyle translation of his play *Mohammed prends ta valise* (Mohammed take your suitcase), a title mistakenly interpreted by religious fundamentalists as an attack on the Prophet.[52] Yacine also helped the students to stage the play. A theater company traveled throughout Kabylia, presenting Yacine's play with great success. The company even won second prize for interpretation at the Carthage Theatre festival in Tunisia in 1972.[53]

In 1978 the University of Tizi Ouzou was established in the capital city, the heart of Kabylia. The government's stated intent initially was to relieve the overcrowded University of Algiers, so the new university enrolled students mainly from the Kabyle villages around the city. It soon became a center for protest, which crystallized within this institution and spilled over to the local hospital and factories.

The Berber Spring

The Berber movement, which was strengthened by outrage and dissatisfaction with the Algerian government concerning the political and cultural situation in Algeria, finally coalesced around a single event: the cancellation of Mouloud Mammeri's lecture on ancient Kabyle poetry at the University of Tizi Ouzou on March 10, 1980. The *wali* (governor) justified the cancellation of the lecture by pointing to the risk of public disorder. People reacted to the cancellation with demonstrations and revolts throughout Kabylia for several weeks. The first march took place the very next day after the cancellation, followed by many others in the region. According to linguist Salem Chaker, this event was characterized by two new features: its international resonance and the massive public protest mounted by all parts of Kabyle civil society.[54] Indeed, while the protest started at the university, it soon included the hospital of Tizi Ouzou, as well as the factories nearby. The movement turned into a major social and popular protest. Along with riots, strikes, and marches, the university, hospital, and factories were occupied, and many violent confrontations with the state police occurred. On April 20, Operation Mizrana started. The police stormed the occupied buildings and arrested several hundred people, professors, students, doctors, and

workers among them. The next day, civilians confronted the police throughout the region. The situation looked like a regional insurrection.[55]

The political prisoners who had been arrested during the protests, and who had become the focus of attention, were finally liberated on June 25. In August a monthlong seminar attended by citizens, linguists, and historians took place in Yakouren. The Yakouren debate, as it was known, was the first of its kind, where culture, identity, language, and education were discussed democratically outside an official context.[56] At the end of this gathering, the Mouvement culturel berbère (Berber Cultural Movement[57]) presented the Algerian government with a substantial document outlining political and social claims and propositions.[58]

For the first time since independence, a social movement was able to affect a whole region and even challenge the power of the central government.[59] Historian Benjamin Stora sees in this reaction the first violent signal of the people's discontent with the one-party (FLN) Algerian state, a system that collapsed after the riots of October 1988.[60] The Algerian authorities framed the Berber riots as the work of foreign agitators and pointed the finger at Paris and Rabat, while in France the communist newspaper *L'Humanité*, reluctant to criticize Algiers, declared that "reactionary elements" were behind the Kabyle uprising.[61] But the Berber uprising was not based only on a linguistic claim.[62] It was also about claiming democratic rights—as Oussalem says, to ask for Berber rights without democracy was meaningless.[63] Stora remarks, "Though Kabyles are often suspected of weakening the national cohesion by claiming specific rights, it turns out that the battle they fight for plurality always announces major moments of transition towards democracy."[64] Only many years later, writes Salhi, were Kabyles able to measure the way in which the local movement had initiated a global movement in the claims for freedom and in the building of citizenship.[65]

In important ways, the Berber Spring was the culmination of work by groups in Algiers and in the Algerian immigrant population in France since 1965. This critical moment also revealed a vital solidarity between intellectual militants and the Kabyle population as a whole. In France, marches were held in solidarity with Kabylia, and support groups kept the movement alive, preventing its eradication by the government's brutal repression.[66] Moreover, spokespersons made the situation known internationally, a new phenomenon that finally broke the silence about the repressive tactics of the Algerian regime, a government otherwise revered as a unique, revolutionary wonder.[67] Lastly, exile provided a space and venue for this

new immigrant Kabyle voice, facilitating the expression of dissent and a constructive reformulation of Algerian politics and the nation.

From Berber to Berber-Beur

The French dictionary *Petit Robert* dates the term "Beur" to 1980 and gives the following definition: "a young Maghrebian born in France to immigrant parents." The term Maghrebian suggests that all children of immigrants from the Maghreb (i.e., Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) are called Beur. The term Beur, however, is more often than not used to designate children of Algerian descent. The term, used in the 1970s by children of immigrants to refer to themselves, gradually replaced "Arabe," which has strong negative connotations.[68]

The Beur movement is a movement for civil rights. It reached a high point of public visibility and media attention with La marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme (the March for Equality and Against Racism) in 1983, commonly known as La marche des Beurs (the Beur March). Like the Berber Spring protests, the march came about because of a series of events and marked the inauguration of a decisive new phase in the mobilizing and communal history of French youth of North African origin and in the political history of the French Republic.

In the suburbs of the major French cities, where most of the population of North African descent lives today, the years of the early 1980s were marked by a general sense of frustration, anger, and dissatisfaction. While the popularity of the extreme right party (Front National) was rising, frustration with President François Mitterrand's leadership grew, mainly because of his broken promises to the French immigrant population. As social issues concerning the housing projects (*les cités*), unemployment, and racism were ignored, there was an increase in race-based crimes, assaults, and murders of North Africans, committed by white French citizens and the police. These crimes occurred all across the nation (in Nancy, the Parisian suburbs, Lyon, Corsica, etc.), and some of the victims were children: Twafik Ouanès, age 9; Mohamed Rabani, 11; Salah Djennane, 9.[69] These murders were trivialized by the justice system; the prison sentences for the murderers were outrageously short.[70] The ensuing confrontation between the youths of these communities and the police, confrontations that date back to the 1970s, became permanent. To this day, confrontation between the youth and the police seems to be a permanent feature of French public life.

In March 1983, in a Lyon housing project called Les Minguettes, a confrontation between the youth and the police led to a hunger strike, which had no effect (leftist priest and activist Christian Delorme, who would later play an important role in the Beur March, was able to reduce the tension). Two months later, Toumi Djaïdja, a young man from Les Minguettes, was trying to extricate a friend from the jaws of a vicious dog when the dog's owner pulled out a handgun and shot him in the stomach. From his hospital bed, Toumi spoke of the need for a march à la Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. Indeed, the youth identified with African Americans to a certain extent and borrowed the idea of a march for civil rights from the famous marches initiated by King, such as the march in Selma, Alabama.[71]

Once the idea of the march was formulated, support committees were created through the networks of leftist, progressive, and antiracism groups, which sometimes had their own agendas for supporting the march.[72] A consequence of avoiding dissension among these groups was that the objective of the march became very vague.[73] Still, as far as the youth of North African descent were concerned, their demands were very clear: they wanted justice and equality. Sociologist Saïd Bouamama argues that in fact two marches were being prepared. One was organized by the groups mentioned previously, which gathered people who protested against racism; the other was that of the youth of immigrant origin who claimed their right to life and voiced their concerns about police brutality and a biased justice system. The two endeavors combined during the march, and the majority of marchers were unaware of these divisions. Once the march arrived in Paris, however, a schism formed in the movement, and a *collectif jeunes de soutien à la marche*, sometimes called *le parlement Beur*, was created. This new group feared political hijacking and claimed autonomy. Its discourse focused on the crimes and racist aggressions committed against the youth.[74]

A few dozen young men and women, mostly of North African descent, and the activist priest Father Christian Delorme marched from Marseille on October 15, 1983, in a climate of general indifference. But in Lyon, the march gathered momentum, and when the marchers arrived in Paris on December 3, a large crowd of more than one hundred thousand people celebrated the event—President Mitterrand even received the marchers. Observers declared it a historical event, and the press was no less enthusiastic. Still, the only concrete gain from the Beur March was the president's consent to an old demand, the ten-year resident card for foreigners. Other promises made that day, such as the right of residents to vote, were never kept.

Nevertheless, the Beur March was successful in that it showed the country a segment of the population that was otherwise ignored by most French

people. And the youth were proud to be finally visible and to stake a claim to difference, along with their attachment to French soil. Sociologist Ahmed Rouadjia argues that the youth's gesture was actually more an act of allegiance to their birth country than a program directed only against French racism, for these youths wanted to be acknowledged as equals. The Beur March was a march for equality and justice, Rouadjia adds, until leftist leaders, clustered around such philosophers as Alain Finkelkraut and Bernard Henry Levy, tried to divert the movement toward the narrower and less affirmative fight against racism and anti-Semitism.[75] And indeed, numerous attempts—many of them successful—were made to manipulate and divert the movement toward a moral and ethical fight rather than a social one.[76] According to many analysts, the Beur March was a failure. The enthusiastic youth movement, full of hope and energy, was not consolidated as a movement of opposition that would seek justice and equality. Yet, the late 1970s and early 1980s were a thriving period for new experiences in media, journalism, and social activism, which should have prevented the political exploitation and manipulation of the movement.

A Fertile Period, 1970 to 1980

The late 1970s were marked by the emergence of a press dedicated to the issues of immigration and civil rights.[77] The most important example is the weekly magazine *Sans frontière* (Without Border), which started in March 1979 and until its closure maintained a multicultural dimension, at least until another weekly magazine, *Baraka* (slang for "luck," literally "blessedness"), took up the project after its formation in March 1986. *Sans frontière* was at the forefront of many struggles and extensively covered the 1983 march. According to Driss El Yazami, the editor-in-chief for *Baraka*'s first eight issues, this experience, "forged by a core of Maghrebis in collaboration with sub-Saharan Africans, Caribbeans, native French, Latin Americans, etc., was quite unusual in that it sought to professionalize minority ethnic journalism."[78] Also, a bimonthly magazine, *Nous autres* (We others), was created in June 1983 to "communicate on and towards the Maghrebian immigration"; it focused on providing practical information, promoting and encouraging artistic creation, and providing a link with each country of origin concerned.[79] The first issue was an informative resource and addressed topics such as citizenship, military service, and Ramadan. The section with practical information provided information on vaccinations, schooling, social benefits, visa applications, and car importation. A large section of the magazine was dedicated to cultural life, with reviews of current plays,

movies, recently published books on immigration, and advertisements for conferences, exhibitions, and concerts featuring bands such as Carte de séjour, Zarma de Banlieue, Les rocking babouches, Meksa, and Agraw. There was also a section on internships that offered training in the Berber and Arabic languages, as well as personal and other ads (Radio Beur).

The early 1980s were especially rich in cultural initiatives from all parts of the immigrant population in France, for the newly elected Socialist government put an end to the state monopoly on radio and television and to the prohibition of foreign associations on French soil. And so, two years before the Beur March, in 1981 Radio Beur was started; it was the first mass media outlet to use the term Beur in the public sphere. Its president, Nacer Kettane, was a former staff member of the magazine *Sans frontière* and was Berber, like most of the other founding members.[80] Radio Beur made public the list of persons (including the children) who had been murdered during the summer of 1983. It participated in and covered all the marches for equality in 1983, 1984, and 1985; during the Beur March of 1983, it was in constant liaison with the march—members of the radio station crossed France with the marchers. Radio Beur's participation and input definitely helped the success of the march. This station came to play an important role in the life of the North African immigrant community and in the lives of the younger generation through its cultural offerings—providing music shows, literature readings, and film screenings, but also specifically directed shows, such as programming for women or the family members of detainees. Moreover, the station broadcast music by numerous new singers and bands, organized many concerts, created a literary prize, and published works of poetry.

In addition to the emergence of new associations, new press on immigration, and community radio stations, a new press agency about immigration and urban culture named IM'média appeared. IM'média was created in June 1983 in the general spirit of the Beur movement. At the origin of IM'média, says Mogniss H. Abdallah, one of its founders, were the group Rock Against Police (RAP) and the death of a youth called Kader. While playing outside his building, Kader was shot dead by a janitor.[81] A mobilization of the local youth was organized, and when TV crews from Antenne 2 (a French TV channel) came to report on the situation, they were forbidden to film and were instead told to use footage shot by the group RAP of Vitry, which had made several short films on the same housing project. The negotiation was successful; Antenne 2 broadcast the footage, and several youths were invited to discuss the issue on TV. The call for an independent media agency was recognized, and IM'média was created in June 1983.

With help from different agencies, IM'média started working with several French and international television companies. In the late 1980s, among its other activities, IM'média made a documentary on the Peugeot strike and a series of films on Algeria. The agency also worked closely with the *sans-papiers* (undocumented aliens) movement and produced many films and documentaries.

During this dynamic period, occasional actions were directed against racism, a tactic that had started as early as the 1970s with RAP.[82] Indeed, Bouamama speaks of the disappointment by some of the youth regarding French leftist parties and the youths' desire to act autonomously. Mobilization took place around concerts, which were staged free of charge within the housing projects and led to specific actions against police violence and deportations. This strategy was realized for the most part in the Paris suburbs and resonated in the suburbs of Lyon, where the band Zaama d'Banlieue was created in 1980, a group that also occasionally organized events, such as protest marches.[83]

The social activism of the late 1970s and early 1980s contrasts with the difficulty encountered by the Beur movement in the aftermath of the march in constituting a social movement independent from political parties. This situation was no doubt partly due to the absence of a grassroots organization and to dependence on these same parties. When needed, the organizing work was done, as with the Beur March, by long-standing militant groups, such as leftist, antiracist, and humanitarian associations. Some of the most interesting and important events, such as the RAP or Zaama d'Banlieue concerts, were occasional and failed to generate further collective action, and they were forgotten in the exhilaration of the march. In his study of the Beur marches, Saïd Bouamama comments on the absence of collective memory as a distinguishing feature of these events. The experiences of the youth were never adequately recorded and transmitted beyond the moment and the particular group, and neither were the experiences of their parents: the Beur March had been preceded by a significant history from both sides of the Mediterranean (the Algerian War, strikes and hunger strikes by immigrant workers, and May 1968), but this history was disconnected from the present and thus remained unexploited during and after the march.

Beurs' Unconscious Collective Memory

Saïd Bouamama, who founded an association aptly named Fertile Memory, is categorical about the failure of the Beur March; he argues that this failure

is due to the absence of a collective memory. He identifies the numerous "roots" that the movement could have drawn upon since its inception, and later on as well. It is true that the movement has often been described as spontaneous, in the press especially, and the Beurs themselves proclaimed their unique moment in French history and the novelty of their engagement. Unaware of their elders' struggles, the youth in the march believed themselves to be the first to speak up against injustice and claim equality, so much so that the 1983 march became a founding myth, to use Bouamama's metaphor.

There is no doubt that the youthful "Beur generation" wanted to disassociate itself from the previous generations (especially from their parents'), and the use of a new term, the word Beur, attests to this desire. These youths claimed that not only were they not immigrants but they were also not illiterate and not invisible. However, this distinction from their parents was not meant as a definitive rupture, as it was often portrayed, for the Beur movement would have little meaning if its objectives were only to claim its participation in Frenchness. One of the slogans of the March was "Vivons égaux avec nos differences" (Let's live equally with our differences). The idea was to show the country that the youths were different from their parents but also different from the mainstream French person, essentially because of a foreign ancestry. Too often, this aspect of the movement has been overlooked or forgotten by the press and the political leaders, who wanted to control the movement. The youth wanted this particular specificity to be acknowledged, and they believed that the march had made it happen, which explains in part the euphoria that accompanied it. The youth soon became disenchanted, however, for the Beurs who were accepted were those who had distanced themselves from their parents and had left behind anything reminiscent of their foreign origins (religion, language, customs, and appearance). This aspect of French cultural integration only reinforced the separation declared by the youth and continued the erasure of the past. In the end, being Beur could almost be synonymous with memory loss.[84] The absence of the transmission of collective memory is attributed to the press, to the Beur themselves, but what about the parents—are they never held accountable?

Because the Beur generation and their parents belong to two different generations, most studies on immigration study them separately. As much as the children wanted to distinguish themselves from their parents, their parents, too, were probably reluctant to take part in their struggle and the formation of the new identity claimed by their children. This distance is well illustrated by the mother in Leila Sebbar's novel *Parle mon fils parle à ta*

mère, who bluntly confesses her disconnection from the young generation and refuses to believe that this new term "Beur" has nothing to do with the country of origin:

> Je ne sais pas pourquoi ils disent Radio-Beur; pourquoi ça Beur, c'est le beurre des Français qu'on mange sur le pain? Je comprends pas. Pour la couleur? Ils sont pas comme ça, c'est pas la couleur des Arabes . . . les jeunes savent, moi je sais pas; j'ose pas demander. . . . Tu ne peux pas m'expliquer ? Peut-être c'est le Pays . . . El Ber, chez nous, en arabe, ça veut dire le pays tu le sais, mon fils, c'est ça ou non? . . . Il eut du mal à la convaincre que Arabe à l'envers, en partant de la dernière syllabe, donnait Beur. . . . Elle ne croyait pas qu'on ne retrouvait pas le pays dans Beur.[85]
>
> (I don't know why they say Radio Beur. Why "Beur"? Is it the butter [*beurre*] of the French that we put on bread? I don't understand. Because of the color? They are not like that; it is not the color of Arabs . . . The young ones know, but I don't and I don't dare to ask . . . You don't want to tell me? Perhaps it is the country . . . El Ber. For us, in Arabic, it means the country; you know that, my son, is it what it is or not? . . . He had a hard time convincing her that Arab back to front, starting from the last syllable, made Beur . . . She could not believe that we could not find the country in Beur.)

For the parents, their children are an extension of themselves, so they expect the children to be successful (more successful than the parents, since the children are educated) and to return to their home country happy and content.[86] Obviously, too often the desire for success was dashed by the lack of requisite work qualifications, unemployment, and racism, and the wish for a return was not evident either, simply because the children felt more at home in France than anywhere else. Perhaps this is the same throughout the North African immigrant community in France and beyond, but Berbers—Kabyles in particular, being of rural origin—have a deep, strong connection to their ancestral land and therefore cultivate this yearning intensely.

Birth in France, or the journey of children from their home country to France, had a dramatic effect on the lives of immigrants. In a rare analysis on the transition period—that is, from a life as a single man to having a family—sociologist Ahsène Zehraoui reports on the drastic changes that the family reunification plan and the arrival of children brought to the lives of immigrant men. Prior to the immigration of North African women in the late 1960s to the 1970s, men's lives were limited and self-sufficient.

Zehraoui notes three places that filled the life of a worker: the workplace, the bed where he slept, and the café, a central place where everything not done in the workplace or the home was done.[87] Outside of these three locations, the men did not exist. With the arrival of new generations after Algerian independence and the family reunification plan, the immigrant worker was forced to change his life and ambitions. The worker, who used to be only a part of a foreign workforce, all of a sudden had a personal past, a culture, and a history. The cultural dimension became central with respect to interactions with—and opposition to—the culture of the host country.[88] From that point on, a long process of negotiation—with the children in particular and with the society at large—took place to maintain and transmit traditional values. Zehraoui calls this family a "social laboratory," a metaphor for its social complexity.[89] Finally, Zehraoui claims, for the Berbers, only malls and concerts can bring together all generations.

As far as the children are concerned, they were primarily born and raised in France and knew very little of their parents' life, culture, origin, or language, except for bits and pieces and except for being aware of a general feeling of misery and nostalgia. There is indeed a fundamental break between these two generations that should be examined further.

Consider as well that the relationship between parents and children was fractured at different levels: the ordinary generational gap between parents and children, reinforced by the move from Algeria to France (the Beurs are often classified as the first generation born in France after or at the end of the Algerian War), and the major fracture, often ignored, that of the war of independence. Indeed, there was a wide gap between the generation that had experienced the war and the generation born around the declaration of Algeria's independence. Most Beur parents participated in the Algerian War in one way or another; all were affected by it, and many carried with them war-related trauma and feelings of loss, pain, and suffering. However, these experiences were mainly shrouded in a thick veil of silence and were hardly ever mentioned to the family, especially to the children. Children often had no idea of their parents' roles and attitudes during the war.[90] The Beur youth who were twenty in 1980 had been born toward the end of the war, around 1960, and did not have any recollection of it. The silence that surrounded the war was yet another factor in the distance between parents and children. While this silence was indispensable during the war, the immigrants kept to the same silence after the war, locking up an important part of their lives and contributing to a feeling of isolation.

Those Beurs who grew up in a poor and racist environment also witnessed their illiterate parents being abused and forced to endure humiliation on a

regular basis. They could not balance this negative experience with knowledge of the assertive behavior of the group in the recent past. Ignorant of their parents' past political involvement and cultural riches, these Beurs genuinely believed that they were pioneers (in the immigrant community) in their denunciation of injustice, inequality, and racism. This, once again, demonstrates the lack of collective memory that Bouamama lamented.

But there is more complexity to the image of the Beurs as a homogenous group, an image that certainly contributed to the dismissal of the group's particular and general histories. Beurs share an urban culture and the experience of life in the housing projects—which constitute a specific socialization process—but consider the diversity of this population lumped together under the umbrella term Beur. At the micro level, there are many different family structures and as many different relationships to the parents' home country.[91] Moreover, there are significant ethnic and regional differences that must be considered. Beyond the youth of North African origin, youth of African, Spanish, and Portuguese descent also joined in the Beur marches. It is therefore difficult to make generalizations about this segment of the French population, so the Beur movement, a bit like the Algerian national liberation movement, emphasized the common Beur experience (especially the French socialization aspect) while not necessarily valuing or acknowledging the diversity that existed within the movement. This last point explains the lack of collective memory and the reason why the march came to represent a "founding myth" rather than the organization of a lasting multicultural movement.

Among the various histories that the Beur movement comprises, a significant proportion of it is Berber. While it is difficult to evaluate the exact number of youths of Berber origin in France (this kind of census does not exist), we can make informed guesses due to the immigration-settlement patterns of the different waves of Algerian immigration to France. In the mid-1950s, more than half of the Algerian immigration to France came from Kabylia. Later Algerian immigration to France diversified, and it is estimated that by the late 1980s half a million people (one-third of the population of Algerian origin in France) were of Berber origin, most of whom were from Kabylia.[92] However, much like their parents during the Algerian War, the youth of Berber origin did not want to distinguish themselves by claiming yet another specificity. Moreover, their parents, to a certain extent, encouraged this disavowal of ancestry.

The absence of collective memory among the Beur generation finds a singular echo in the leitmotifs associated with the defense of the Kabyle culture and identity. Indeed, it has become almost symptomatic of the Berber

commitment to accompany the condemnation of linguistic suppression with a lament on loss and lack.[93] But most Berbers, whether militants or not, whose awareness of the plight of their language (thought to be on the brink of extinction) increased in the 1970s and 1980s, felt estranged from the Beur movement, which reflected their worst nightmare: a generation that seemed cut off from its roots and language and claimed a space, albeit a singular space, within French identity. One can easily understand how Berbers—recently sensitized to the possibility of eradication their language was facing—did not pay attention to this new generation growing up in France. These older Berber individuals, who had sometimes put themselves in harm's way to fight for cultural and linguistic rights, were too steeped in Algerian politics and their own immediate problems to fully grasp what was happening within the next generation and their children's role in it. Interestingly, the most active Berber militants did not transmit to their children the very culture and language they had fought so hard to defend.

The literature that has emerged from this segment of the French population is grounded in these silences and absences. In the Beur literary tradition and especially, I would argue, in what I identify as Berber-Beur literature, we see this lack in a most immediate sense in the absent father and then in the relationship to the parents' home country, which is either distant—hence absent—or so idealized that the narrator must experience it on her own terms.

Berber-Beur Literature

Despite doubts that the term Beur comes from a contraction of Berbères d'Europe (Berbers of Europe), this etymological explanation is useful, as it does tell us that a large number of people of Berber origin are also identified with the Beur population and connected to the Beur movement.[94] The same is true with regard to literature: between 1980 and 1990, there were twenty-six published Beur authors, twenty-three of whom are of Algerian descent, with the other three being of Moroccan descent. Among the writers of Algerian descent, a large majority were of Berber origin, primarily Kabyle. Thus, a large number of first novels by Beur writers were written by authors of Kabyle origin. The families of almost all these authors originated from rural areas, and the majority are from Kabylia, which has been the single most important region for Algerian emigration.[95] Among the first Beur writers, fewer than ten continue to write fiction regularly, and a majority of them are of Kabyle origin. These facts underscore the significant place that writers of Berber origin hold within the larger group of Beur writers.

To substantiate this last point, I briefly survey the literature produced by writers of Berber origin with reference to six early Beur writers—their novels were published between 1980 and 1990—who have at least one parent who is Kabyle (and here it is the father). Among them, two have become established writers (Tassadit Imache and Akli Tadjer), while the other four (Farida Belghoul, Sakinna Boukhedenna, Ferrudja Kessas, and Nacer Kettane) are, for different reasons, each the author of a single novel. This group represents a good sample of the writing of the time, focused as these authors were on establishing the Beur voice in the French political and social landscape.

What brings these six writers together is first the historical moment in which they wrote. Again, the Beur movement was at its peak, and it is no surprise that two of the writers considered here, Farida Belghoul and Nacer Kettane, took an active role therein. It was also a fundamental moment in the history of Algerian immigration, since the Beurs were the first post-Algerian War generation, the first to be born or raised in France, and the first generation to receive formal education. The second element these writers share is their Berber origin (whether it is acknowledged or not), which is often associated with the father or his country of origin, and both are often intertwined. Considering the way these novelists portray the father figure or the main character's relationship to his country gives an indication of their relationships to their Berber origin. In the texts surveyed below, the relationships to the father or to his country of origin are mainly based on a lack, with which each novel grapples. Thus, Berber origin functions as an additional factor in the feeling of foreignness instead of as an anchor of identity and cultural awareness.

Indeed, in none of the early novels written by authors of Berber origin is the author's Berber ancestry emphasized, claimed, or explored, with the exception of Kettane's protagonist in *Le sourire de Brahim*, who still needs to discover Kabylia for himself before falling in love with it. Instead, the Berber origin is often obscured by the all-encompassing term Arab, which conveniently encompasses all cultural differences in the lives of the youth of North African origin living in France. The term Arab gives a sense of belonging to a community that finds itself caught between the parents' world and the French society that discriminates against all North Africans without any distinction between one ethnic group or another. Moreover, a Berber background does not appear as a feature in some of the novels discussed here because the authors had little awareness of their Berber background and its specificity and did not mention it in their autobiographical fiction. Others might consider this additional distinction to be a useless burden

to their already heavy, complex heritage. The use of the term Arab among the youth of Berber origin recalls the previous generations of Berbers who would naturally use the term Arab to refer to themselves. Kabyles would often say, "nekwni si araben" ("we, Arabs") to refer to all Algerians, and often in opposition to other cultural or religious traditions, notably Western ones.[96] Ancillary to this desire to belong to a community is the desire not to create further divisions and distinctions within an already marginalized group. The stakes are even higher when the umbrella community to which one belongs is constantly under assault of one form or another.

Thus, writers of Berber origins usually prefer to underline the commonalities the youth of North African origin share, namely their socioeconomic and historical conditions and their similar geographical origins. Most Beur writers' parents, most of whom were illiterate, labored in difficult, dangerous, low-paying jobs to provide for their usually large families. In some cases, they lived in shantytowns (*bidonvilles*), especially in the 1950s and 1960s (as was the case for the now well-known writer Azouz Begag), or more generally in run-down housing projects outside big cities (*banlieues*). Thus, for this population, contact with French society was minimal and unpleasant, mostly involving administrative encounters and paperwork. The exception was the school, the very institution that would create a gap between the literate children and their parents. School was also the place where Beur writers and their characters experienced racism, as well as a prejudiced representation of Algeria. Under such conditions, the school dropout rate was inevitably high, but some students were able to cope, struggle, and write personal narratives—that is, their life stories. Indeed, most Beur fiction is either autobiographical or semiautobiographical. Beur writers strive to provide the outside world, particularly French society, with an internally derived and humane narrative that critically engages media stereotypes and misrepresentations. Moreover, the emergence of this literature coincided with the Beur March of 1983 and directly resulted from the political and social realities of the time.[97]

In addition to the Beurs' common living conditions, there is the issue of a Berber origin that has rarely, if ever, been considered and is an element that provides an additional insight into this body of work. I identify this grouping as "Berber-Beur literature," because the writers' parents, or at least their fathers, are Kabyle, but my intention is not to label these writers, some of whom would probably simply refuse it, as will be shown in the following. Their Berber ancestry is sometimes totally absent from their narratives. Instead, I point to an absence constitutive of this early literature that I highlight here under the term Berber, because it is doubly alienated. In their

majority, Beurs and Beur writers had difficulty relating to their North African origins, so for those of Berber origin, the feeling of alienation is more acute. This intensity of feeling is portrayed in the father figure, Algeria, or both.

The writers in this group developed a complex set of feelings toward their Berber origin that they did not address directly in their work; rather, they focused on their daily lives in France. While early Beur literature is construed as a spontaneous literature—a literature of emergency, in a way—whose objective was to vent the exasperation of a generation, I contend that the absence of origin is symptomatic of a significant blind spot in this early literature that is also often evident in the description of the father. Indeed, more often than not, the father is absent, sick, dead, weak, too proud, or withdrawn.

Farida Belghoul is the author of one published novel, *Georgette!*, which received the Prix Hermès, which is awarded to first-time novelists. She also made two short films, *Madame la France* and *Le départ du père*, and was a militant figure in the Beur movement. *Georgette!* is about a seven-year-old girl caught in the tangles of her Franco-Algerian identity. What makes the novel appealing is that the little girl is the narrator of the novel and describes her world and alienation in her own words; the voice is both childish and genuine. The girl's father plays a major role in this novel, albeit as a paradox, as his place in the life of the child is threatened and diminished, which causes the child to lose her point of reference.

Pointedly, the father is opposed to the girl's teacher in a fierce duel for authority. This duel has one victim: the unnamed child narrator. The novel cleverly addresses the inner dramatic and existential conflicts that the teacher—and, through her, the French educational system—create in a young girl of Algerian origin. Her father, the ultimate symbol of authority at home, competes with the teacher, whose actions and discourse run counter to his own. The father's lack of a French education (or any formal education) and ignorance about the school system are damning. He cannot even distinguish between the different types of pencils ordered by the teacher, and when he tries to help his daughter write, he teaches her to write "backward" in her notebook (from right to left and starting from the back of the notebook, as with Arabic), for which she is reprimanded. The father is therefore portrayed as a "classic" Arab immigrant.[98]

The father feels diminished by the school system, which in turn diminishes his daughter's respect for him. When the father mentions that he wants to meet her teacher, the daughter secretly refuses, telling herself, "Jamais de la vie j'organiserai un rendez-vous entre un idiot et la maîtresse.

Je préfère mourir ici, assise, jusqu'à demain matin"[99] (Never ever would I organize a meeting between an idiot and my teacher. I prefer to die right here, seated, until tomorrow morning). However, the young girl has already distanced herself from her father, especially regarding *his* language, which she declares she would never buy if it were for sale: "En vérité, si mon père me la [langue] vend, je n'achète pas sa langue. Je collectionne juste ce qui brille[100] (Really, if my father sells it to me, I would not buy his language. I collect only what glitters). She therefore stands in opposition to her father's unspecified language, which she probably does not understand: "Souvent, il raconte des choses que je ne comprends pas. Il parle devant moi. Pourtant j'écoute ailleurs"[101] (Often, he says things that I do not understand. He speaks in front of me. Still, I listen elsewhere). She compares the language to his voice—an intimate bond—which she claims is beautiful and which she would have no problem buying: "le principal c'est la beauté de sa voix. La sienne, je la paye tout de suite"[102] (the most important thing is the beauty of his voice. His, I would pay for it right away). The coexistence of love and anger within the little girl is of the utmost importance here, since this ambivalence points to an unresolved break in communication aggravated by the teacher that leads to a rupture between the daughter and her father.

Languages (French and Kabyle) and signs (Roman and Arabic script) crisscross in this narrative; the little girl feels torn and alienated from them all, as the first line of the novel tells us: "La sonne cloche . . . non, la cloche sonne"[103] (The ring bells . . . no, the bell rings). The little girl struggles with French and with Kabyle, and Roman and Arabic scripts compete in her notebook. These languages and signs, however, are never identified as such. It is to Belghoul's credit to have rendered these complexities in the form of a narrative produced from a child's perspective.

The duel between the little girl's father and the teacher (and the society she represents) continues internally and is illustrated by the name Georgette. The narrator, in an episode that may be imaginary, encounters an old lady who asks her to write letters for her sons under the name Georgette. The little girl refuses and immediately thinks of her father's reaction to such depersonalization. Yet Georgette is the only name associated with the narrator, and it is the eponymous name of the novel. Does this mean that becoming Georgette (a very French-sounding name) is the only alternative to jumping in front of a car for a little girl to escape such contradictions? Belghoul's novel brings the discrepancy between school and home to a point of crisis when the girl is run over by a car, and the last line of the novel reads "J'étouffe au fond d'un encrier"[104] (I am suffocating at the bottom of an ink pot). This last line clearly implicates the school and its

methods as the culprit in her death. Indeed, the novel condenses in a unique way many issues related to school and its impact on children, especially foreign ones. There is no sequel to *Georgette!*, which remains Farida Belghoul's only novel, written after she became frustrated with the failure of the Beur movement, in which she actively participated. But school continued to dominate Belghoul's life, as she became a teacher herself. As a parent, she decided after a few years not to send her children to school but to teach them at home.

Tassadit Imache, born to a French mother and an Algerian father, is one of two writers in this selection who continued to write. Her novels revisit past traumatic events caught in the memory of childhood, which she addresses through reflections on writing and memory. Imache finds in literature the space to grapple with the complexities of her bicultural identity and to pursue her commitment to humanism.[105]

Imache's semiautobiographical novel *Une fille sans histoire* tells the story of Lil, who, like Imache, has a French mother and an Algerian father. A photograph found in her father's wallet after his death triggers Lil's journey back to childhood, with the Algerian War as a background. In the complex yet generous portrait Imache draws of the father, and in the acute perception and rendering of her childhood reminiscences, one can detect the sensitivity to language and the emotional depth that Imache will explore further in subsequent novels.

In *Une fille sans histoire*, the father is portrayed as a hot-tempered, proud, reserved man of few words who endured police violence in France during the last years of the Algerian War.[106] He is mostly distant with his children, whose mother is French and endures racism and humiliation for being the wife of an Algerian. His wife gives the children French first names against the father's wishes, and she keeps them away from her husband's family and raises them so that nothing of their foreign origin is evident. She even sends them to church. The father tries to resist this denial of his culture, but in vain. He knows that the children would never learn his language or go to his country, so he gives up on them. Only Lil—originally named Lila by her father after his mother but changed to Lil by her mother in order to sound less foreign—finds grace in his eyes. As an adult, Lil visits her weak father, who promises to take her to Kabylia, holding her hand. At this moment, she feels love and hatred for him ("C'était à mourir d'amour et de haine").[107] Yet later she visits a library—a common trope in early Beur novels—to learn about her father's country and culture. After his death, she decides to make the journey to Algeria on her own, not to become closer to it—Algeria being a place that entails so much pain—but to cut ties with it: "Elle sait qu'elle

va là-bas non pas tant pour la connaître que pour renoncer à elle, l'Algérie. C'est la dernière chose qu'il lui reste à perdre. Après elle devrait vivre sans ça"[108] (She knows that she is heading there not so much to know Algeria, but to renounce it. It is the last thing left for her to lose. Afterward, she will have to live without it). Clearly, Lil's relationship with her father is, like that of Belghoul's narrator, one of love and frustration, a feature of several of the first Beur novels. In Imache's novel, the rupture with the father is completed through the loss of Algeria.

Omar, the protagonist in Akli Tadjer's novel *Les ANI du "Tassili*," also decides to make the journey to Algeria. Tadjer locates the novel on the boat taking Omar back to France; this is symbolic, for the novel starts where it ends, on the way "home" from the "home" country. Omar's travel objective is stated at the beginning of the novel: stage d'adaptation volontaire (voluntary adaptation training course), a personal challenge to see how long he can stay in Algeria. His previous trip, three years earlier, lasted fifteen days, and this one lasts eighteen days. Despite the humor and lighter tone of the novel, the narrator's feeling of loss after his journey ends is close to what Lil feels before leaving France. "Algérie je t'en veux de n'avoir pas su me retenir. J'étais venu te voir avec la secrète ambition de réussir ce stage d'adaptation volontaire"[109] (Algeria, I blame you for not being able to hold on to me. I came with the secret ambition of successfully passing this voluntary adaptation phase).

Like Lil, who borrows all the books related to her father's country from the local library, Omar carefully prepares for his trip by researching Algeria. He reads Ibn Khaldun; listens to Radio Beur, Radio Soleil, and Radio Afrique; and eats Algerian food. Still, he fails his "training course." For this trip to have been successful, Omar would have had to discover what links him to this country and to feel close to its people and culture. Lil knows that this quest is useless, since she fails the ultimate proximity test: that of her relationship with her father. So the culture, religion, or language of the parents is often substituted for the failed relationship with the parents.

Les ANI du "Tassili," Tadjer's first novel, addresses the serious issue of the return to Algeria for a Beur youth, as well as the question of identification for a number of people who live between Algeria and France, symbolically represented here by the Algerian boat named *Tassili*. The title itself is enigmatic and ironic; "Les ANI" stands for *Arabes non identifiés* (nonidentified Arabs), which evokes another acronym, OVNI (*object volant non identifié*, UFO), a play on words that maliciously exaggerates the strangeness of this community and associates it with aliens from another planet:

> Ils ont la redoutable faculté de s'adapter partout où ils se trouvent. . . . Ils ont, en l'espace d'une génération, crée leur propre espace culturel, leur propre code, leur propre dialecte. Ils sont beaux. Ils sont forts. Ils savent d'un seul coup d'œil faire la différence entre un vrai et un faux ANI. Ils aiment la vie et débordent d'énergie. Des brigades spéciales de police ont dû être formées à leur intention pour freiner leur ardeur. Ce sont les rois de la démerde, les rois de la navigation en eau trouble.[110]
>
> (They have a formidable ability to adapt to wherever they are. . . . Within one generation, they have created their own cultural space, their own code, their own dialect. They are beautiful. They are strong. They know at a glance how to distinguish a true ANI from a fake one. They love life and are full of energy. Special police squads were formed to curb their enthusiasm. They are the kings of resourcefulness, the kings of navigation in troubled waters.)

Tadjer describes the ANI in very positive terms, despite the fact that their energy, creativity, and presence are not appreciated. If it were not for Tadjer's sarcastic tone, the phrase "Beur is beautiful" could summarize this passage. Tadjer does not engage the common criticisms of this population but instead extols its talents and beauty. The acronym also comments on the Beurs, who are simply identified as anonymous Arabs, although, like Omar, many of them are not even Arabs.

On his way back from Algeria, Omar realizes that Algeria is much more than "a plate of couscous, two records, a book of geography and one of literature" and that he still has a lot to learn ("il me reste encore beaucoup à apprendre").[111] Once again, the relationship with Algeria is fraught with paradox, as Omar's declaration about Algiers illustrates: "El Djazaïr, je te hais d'amour"[112] (El Djazair, I hate you with love). Despite his disillusionment, Omar refuses to choose between France and Algeria and decides instead to lie in an immense deck chair stretching from Tamanrasset to Dunkirk ("Je me suis acheté un immense transat qui, une fois déplié, s'étale de Tamanrasset à Dunkerque").[113] This geographical space corresponds in reverse to De Gaulle's famous phrase that described imperial France, which stretched from "Dunkirk to Tamanrasset."

The novel's strength resides in its treatment of serious topics with humor and irony. Omar is an engaging character because he does not take himself seriously; his humor and good spirit remain intact despite his past experiences and the challenging psychological and physical journey

he undertakes. *Les ANI du "Tassili"* received the Prix Georges Brassens in 1985, and Tadjer continued to write successful novels in addition to working as a screenwriter.

As for Sakinna Boukhedenna, the question of her Algerian roots is associated with her violent rejection of French racism toward immigrants. Moreover, the only Algerian culture Sakinna, the first-person narrator, and her sisters learn about from their parents seems to be an unhealthy combination of interdictions and reprimands. Life with her parents, their role in her upbringing and education, are hardly ever mentioned in Boukhedenna's *Journal "Nationalité: immigré(e)."* Sakinna's life in France is composed mostly of bad experiences, especially at school and in work-related contexts, such as job searches. Faced with multiple rejections, Sakinna decides to hold her head high and claim her "Arabness."[114] She takes Arabic lessons and sympathizes with all the Arab causes and oppressed people in the world—especially the Palestinian cause—while rejecting the French language and Frenchness:

> Je vais au cours d'arabe, je dessine ma langue et je hais de plus en plus la langue coloniale que mes frères du pays avec moi, ont été obligés d'apprendre au détriment de notre langue arabe.[115]
>
> (I go to Arabic class, I draw my language, and I hate more and more the colonial language that I and the brothers of my country were forced to learn to the detriment of our Arabic language.)

The violence of her discourse hardly changes after she bravely decides to travel to Algeria on her own. In 1981 Sakinna takes the same boat (*Tassili*) as Omar does and naively hopes to discover the beauties and delights of Algeria: "J'étais heureuse car j'allais découvrir ma plus belle illusion, mon phantasme, mon rêve, l'Algérie"[116] (I was happy because I was about to discover my most beautiful illusion, my fantasy, my dream, Algeria). Her trip turns into a nightmare. To Algerians, Sakinna is "the immigrant," a woman of little virtue and no honor and worthy of no respect. She is constantly insulted in the streets. Her sincere and courageous attempt at finding a job and settling down in Algeria is a fiasco. She declares: "L'Algérie est ma terre, mais je sens douloureusement que j'y suis étrangère. Etrangère à leurs yeux d'Algériens"[117] (Algeria is my land, but I have the painful feeling that I am foreign to it. Foreign to their Algerian eyes). Disillusioned, Sakinna takes a plane back to France, where she admits to being freer than in Algeria; however, her identity is still unclear, since the novel closes with the sentence

"je cours le monde pour savoir d'où je viens"[118] (I travel the world to know where I come from). For the time being, Sakinna feels neither Arab nor French but "immigrant," which she claims is her new citizenship, hence the title of the novel, *Journal "Nationalité: immigré(e)."* Sakinna projects onto Algeria all of her dreams and desires, which are dispelled on arrival. At the end of the novel, the lack of Algeria is very much present; it is a gaping hole.

Boukhedenna's novel is a cry of exasperation about the world that surrounds her. However, she never engages her interior world in terms other than anger, which limits the scope of her novel. In fact, the novel reads more like a testimony in the heat of the moment, a rant, which might explain why Boukhedenna ceased to publish creative work. The interesting moments of the novel occur when it offers a glimpse into the powerful feeling of rage the narrator develops over the years, leading her even to fantasize about murder: "Je sentais l'envie amère de tuer un Français"[119] (I felt the bitter need to kill a French person). Sakinna's trips to Algeria only reveal her alienation from both cultures. Finally, her perception of Algeria and Algerian culture is created by the outside environment and thus is mediated by sweeping generalizations and the political discourse of the time—a world apart from everyday lived reality. Sakinna's isolation and alienation are also reflected in the absence of any acknowledgement of her Berber origin.[120]

While Boukhedenna's novel takes place for the most part outside of family life, Ferrudja Kessas' narrative, *Beur's Story*, takes place inside the family apartment, where Malika, the first-person narrator, is, at eighteen, the oldest child. When Kessas wrote this novel, she was driven by anger, declares Jean Déjeux, who notes that it took her eight years to finish the manuscript.[121] Even if initiated by anger, Kessas' narrative, as told by an omniscient narrator, is not a testimony. The author keeps some distance from her subject and strives to offer a fair picture of Malika and her family's experience, caught between tradition and modernity. Malika, Kessas' alter ego, is not a heroine and is not exceptional. As the oldest child, she gains a sense of responsibility early on, which, coupled with her self-effacing personality, leads her to want to understand everyone's point of view, motivations, and pain. Kessas' attempt to achieve balance between Malika's perspective and her family's, which testifies to her generosity and also probably her lack of self-affirmation, makes the novel atypical for the period when numerous first-person testimonials and narratives were published—the novel in general being a means to individualize a character (or characters) and to explore her distinctiveness. There is no such exploration here that would have given the novel more depth. Kessas' novel resists this individualization in

order to offer an objective description of an Algerian family living in France, a narrative close to a kind of sociology, which might explain why there is no sequel to *Beur's Story*.

Beur's Story tells of an ordinary, almost stereotypical Beur family. The Algerian parents have several children and live in a drab housing project where people strive to make ends meet. There are very few opportunities for activities outside of the house, especially for girls. For Malika, life is limited to going to school and then back home, where she is responsible for a sizable portion of the housework. Her only relationship between school and home is with her best friend, Farida, a lively and cheerful young woman who skips school to shut herself up at home and who commits suicide at the end of the novel. It seems that Farida is the bubblier version of Malika, who remains shy and obedient despite her intelligence and many reasons to rebel. Farida's tragic end points once again to the inner contradictions the youth experienced at the time and from which some young women escaped via death. Malika's father is a somber, silent man who sometimes drinks heavily. Twelve years earlier, he fell from construction scaffolding and became an invalid, losing his job as a result. Since that day, he has remained at home, supporting his large family with a modest pension and the help of his eldest son.

Probably because of her limited horizon, her family life, and her subdued personality, Malika's discourse is less virulent and more self-possessed than Sakinna's, though in her monotonous life there are moments that she obviously cherishes. Malika recounts a tender episode with her father, who speaks only Kabyle, which compels her to speak it, too, though with difficulty. One day, after a trip to the local library, she shows him books on Algeria, which bring a smile to his face, lightening his mood: "Et puis tiens, je t'ai apporté un livre sur l'Algérie! Un sourire plein de plaisir entrouvrit ses lèvres qu'il avait minces, presque pincées, illuminant son vieux visage buriné"[122] (Here, I brought you a book on Algeria. He opened his lips in a smile full of pleasure, which illuminated his craggy old face). The description of her father's smile reflects all the love Malika feels for this old man and how she wishes there were more moments like this. Speaking her father's language, thinking of him while in the library, sitting and looking at books on Algeria with him, all show the effort Malika has made to nurture her relationship with her father. This effort bears fruit, but Malika remains dissatisfied, for her father is unwilling to compromise and show interest in her and her life:

> Curieusement, elle aurait désiré le prendre dans ses bras, l'embrasser et lui dire autre chose que la guerre d'Algérie. Parler d'elle, confier

ses secrets, ses angoisses. Mais elle savait que c'était impossible et se contenta de rester à ses côtés.[123]

(Oddly enough, she would have liked to take him in her arms, to kiss him and to talk about something else besides the Algerian War. To talk about herself, tell him her secrets, her worries. But she knew it was impossible and made do with staying by his side.)

Malika sits next to her father, a physical proximity that replaces but does not compensate for the lack of complicity and understanding between them. Her silence indicates both the frustration and love she feels toward her father, just like Lil and Belghoul's narrator.

Talking about Algeria and reading books about the country are ways to connect with the parents, usually the father, who would otherwise remain unreachable. Children sometimes imagine Algeria as a sordid place or, alternatively, as a wonderful place. As for the parents, there is no doubt that, to them, Algeria—Kabylia in particular—is paradise. In Akli Tadjer's 2002 novel *Le porteur de cartable*, Omar, the narrator, is told by his uncle that Kabylia is more beautiful than the gardens of paradise. One day Omar's father describes this paradise to his skeptical son:

Le matin quand tu te lèves, pas un bruit . . . Tu ouvres la fenêtre. Rien devant. Rien derrière. La montagne à perte de vue . . . Après, on va au puits qui est au bout de la route pour chercher de l'eau qu'on charge sur un bourricot. Ça prend facilement la matinée. A midi, on mange des figues séchées qu'on trempe dans de l'huile d'olive. Un régal. Après, on se met sous un olivier et on fait la sieste. Le soir, pour changer, on mange un couscous aux fèves et on boit du petit-lait battu . . . Comme ça pendant un mois.[124]

(The morning when you wake up, not a sound . . . You open the window. Nothing in front. Nothing behind. The mountain as far as the eye can see . . . Then we go to the well at the end of the road to fetch water that our donkey carries. It easily takes the whole morning. At noon, we eat dried figs dipped in olive oil. Delicious. Then, we lie down under an olive tree and we take a nap. In the evening, for a change, we eat couscous with fava beans and drink buttermilk . . . It goes on like that for a month.)

This routine of trips to the well, naps in the afternoon, and a diet of dry figs and couscous does not please little Omar, who has heard from his *pied-noir* friend Raphaël about picturesque sites in Algiers and Tipaza. When Omar suggests visiting these sites, his father becomes furious and adamant: the

only place they will visit is the village. And so it is the village that embodies the hopes and dreams of the parents, while France is the place that embodies the hopes and dreams of the children. For Omar, "his" France is the second arrondissement of Paris, and home is the buildings and streets in the area where he lives.

There are, however, a few instances where Beur characters come to acknowledge and value Kabylia and become as attached to it as their parents are. One example is Brahim in Nacer Kettane's novel, *Le sourire de Brahim*, whose cover announces, on a separate red sleeve, that it is "un roman Beur" (a Beur novel). Like Lil, Sakinna, and Omar, Brahim, the protagonist of Kettane's novel, decides to go to Algeria and "discover the Algeria of his fantasies," though for him, Algeria is nothing more "than France with sunshine" ("l'Algérie, ce n'était ni plus ni moins que la France avec du soleil").[125] However, unlike Sakinna and Omar, Brahim is taken under the wing of government agencies, since, as a medical student, he enrolled in a volunteer program in health care. The first representative from the government quizzes him about his relationship to Algeria. At home, Brahim speaks Kabyle but never learned Arabic, and when the customs officer addresses him in Arabic, he confesses his ignorance. "But you are Algerian?" replies the officer.[126] This feeling of disconnection and estrangement is repeated during Brahim's stay in Algeria. When he questions decisions that are deemed "revolutionary" by the Party, he is told that he does not know the country. A nurse, angry at his concern for an old man, tells Brahim that people are better cared for in Algeria than in "his" country. To them, he was not Algerian; he was an émigré, almost a foreigner ("Il n'était pas algérien pour eux, il était émigré, presque un étranger quoi!").[127] However, over a few days' break from work, he travels to Kabylia, where he was born. His village had been bombarded during the war, and at age five he went to France. His bond with his old aunt is immediate and warm, and the Kabyle landscape takes his breath away:

> Brahim voyait la Kabylie défiler devant ses yeux. Il ne l'avait pas rêvée aussi belle, aussi chatoyante. . . . Une sensation vertigineuse l'envahit. . . . Le ciel et la montagne semblaient faire l'amour. . . . Une beauté rare l'entourait. . . . Enfin, il mettait les pieds dans le pays de ses rêves![128]
>
> (Kabylia unfolded before Brahim's eyes. He hadn't dreamed her so beautiful, so shimmering. . . . A vertiginous sensation overcame him. . . . Sky and mountain looked like they were making love. . . . A rare beauty surrounded him. . . . He finally set foot in the country of his dreams!)

Unlike the other characters discussed in this section, Brahim's feeling of alienation in Algeria is mitigated by his reconnection with Kabylia and his aunt. The fact that he also speaks Berber with his parents helps keep alive the connection to his origins. So, in Brahim's case, the connection to Algeria is made in part through Kabylia, specifically the village. However, the novel opens with a significant tragic episode that links Algeria to France, the 1961 Algerian demonstration in Paris that turned into a massacre when the police attacked the marchers. In the novel, Brahim is eight and is accompanied by both of his parents and his younger brother, who is killed during the police assault that day. From then on, Brahim loses his smile, hence the title of the novel. While he feels that he belongs to both countries, he also feels caught between the two, like the unwanted child of two estranged lovers:

> Pour Brahim il n'y avait pas d'équivoque, il était chez lui partout avec la Méditerranée comme drapeau. Mais il avait l'impression d'être un otage. Comme si la France et l'Algérie étaient deux amants séparés de longue date qui n'en finissaient plus de se disputer et de se renvoyer la responsabilité d'une paternité insupportable.[129]
>
> (For Brahim, there was no doubt: he was at home everywhere with the Mediterranean as standard. But he felt like a hostage. As if France and Algeria were two lovers who had split up a long time ago, but were endlessly arguing and refused to face up to the responsibility for this unbearable paternity.)

This tension Brahim feels about the two countries probably plays a role in his (and the author's) militant support for an independent media that would allow his generation to take the floor and present their views. In addition, the acknowledgement of Brahim's (and the author's) Berber origins certainly heightened Kettane's sensibility toward the Berber question but also toward other issues that affect immigrants in France. In 1980 Kettane was already in his late twenties and a major figure of the Beur movement. A founder of Radio Beur, he became its president; later, though a medical doctor, he pursued his interest in alternative media. He became the president of Beur FM, a more commercially oriented radio station, and more recently, in 2003, he founded Beur TV, the first TV station that addresses the Beur and immigrant populations of France and beyond.

The literary value of the novels discussed here varies from novel to novel. They address different concerns: Belghoul's and Imache's novels about two little girls are creative and poignant; Tadjer's novels are tender and

humorous; Kettane's single novel is a testimonial that is valuable for the historical and cultural events it describes (e.g., October 1961), as well as for the account of the rise of an important figure in the 1980s social landscape (Kettane himself); Boukhedenna's cri de coeur is fervent and necessarily short-lived; Kessas' novel is a courageous effort to share a family's social and cultural predicaments, which makes it an interesting read from a sociological perspective. These first Beur novelists have in common the desire to share their experience, to voice their concern, and—for some of them—to find their own voice. Incidentally, these Beur authors were not inspired by their Algerian elders, whom they usually knew little about at the time of their writing.[130]

As discussed in this section, the early Beur novel is not concerned with origins per se, though some scholars insist otherwise and even assign to these texts ideological content that they do not possess. One example is anthropologist Paul Silverstein, whose book *Algeria in France*, published in 2004, contains a chapter that addresses the early Beur novel. According to Silverstein, "the Beur novel rewrites the immigrant past": "As a narrative, the Beur novel rewrites the immigrant past in order to understand the intercultural present and provide room for future Beur agency in France. As such, Beur writing participates in the same ideological space as nationalist histories that narrate the nation's past in order to represent the current state of affairs as a predetermined, teleological outcome."[131] While any writing process entails a retrospective (a memoir, for example), I have demonstrated that the objective of the early Beur writers was to share their experiences and have their voices heard. To construe the Beur novel as being in the same ideological space as nationalist histories is to deny the writers and their community any individual voice and identity and to view them as a monolithic entity, which is exactly what these writers were struggling against. These writers do not rewrite or reorder Algeria's or France's past. To the contrary, I argue that, as with any therapeutic process, never mind writing, Beur authors write about experiences and common events from the past that persist in the present. They are engaged with the here and now.[132]

Moreover, no matter how politically engaged Beur writers were, the act of writing for them was meant to open a space for their own voices to emerge, and when they address political issues, it is mostly within the French space. A good example is Mehdi Lallaoui, who was expelled from school at age fifteen for organizing a strike. His novel, *Les Beurs de Seine*, narrates the struggles of union organizing in French factories with French and non-French comrades. In the best cases, if there is any cultural or

religious identification, it is an elaboration of this first effort and would therefore take place in subsequent novels.

Early Beur fiction addresses the experience of living in France and the act of writing, which is a novel exercise. As Tahar Djaout puts it, these novels are "hardly masterpieces" and are sometimes "rudimentary from a literary point of view," but they provide invaluable insight into and appreciation for a particularly dynamic historical moment.[133]

In this brief discussion of some of the first Beur writers of Berber origin, I have focused on the way in which the Kabyle father and his country of origin are portrayed. This portrayal reveals a feeling of loss or lack that each author treats in his/her own way (traveling to learn about or reconnect with one's origins, traveling to cut ties, avoiding, forgetting, dismissing the issue). The father figure is obviously crucial during childhood, but in traditional Kabyle society, which is strongly patriarchal, the father is also inseparable from the important communal values of respect and honor. Providing for his family goes together with living in respect and dignity. In France, the father, who exists only through his function as an immigrant worker, is denigrated; his authority and sense of honor are trampled in a society where he is considered illiterate, ignorant, and uncivilized; as a consequence, he is sometimes dismissed by his own children. In addition, the father sometimes lives in a family situation he cannot control (as with the French wife in Imache's novel) or he loses control of the symbolic value of work. Thus, fathers are often described as irritable, worn out, downcast, weak, absentminded, and resorting to alcohol to alleviate their sense of failure. One of the most pathetic father figures is probably Omar's uncle, who appears in a later novel by Akli Tadjer. In Tadjer's 2005 novel, *Alphonse*, Uncle Salah lives with his French wife and children, for whom he is no more than an inanimate prop, an unimportant and used piece of furniture. They disregard his religious beliefs and use abusive language about Algerians in his presence. Uncle Salah is nonexistent to his family and he "keeps his life inside" ("il gardait sa vie à l'intérieur").[134] Under these circumstances, very little positive cultural transmission takes place, and rupture is often the way out.

Further exploration of these themes of loss or lack provides some insight into this body of work, whose definition and academic label are under constant revision. At one time, for example, this corpus was called "Beur literature" or "literature of the immigration"; now, among other classifications, it is "Maghrebi-French literature."[135] Although the term Beur, which mainly refers to the literary production of the 1980s, is not used anymore, other designations attest to an ongoing reconsideration of the significance,

location, and scope of these authorial voices that continue to emerge from the *banlieues* and elsewhere to the point that one wonders if, as predicted, they will dissipate or assimilate into mainstream French literature.[136]

Exploring topics such as loss, lack, dismissal, and forgetfulness in this literature certainly contributes to a better understanding of Berber-Beur voices, as well as Beur voices in general and the voices that follow. In some cases, forgetfulness is promoted and even appears like a process that is consciously at work to such an extent that Alec Hargreaves writes about a strategy of unbelonging ("une stratégie de désappartenance"[137]). Of all of the Berber-Beur writers, it is Akli Tadjer and Tassadit Imache who have carried their writing experience forward and have explored these topics further in their subsequent literary work.

Berber and Beur: Junction and Beyond

Ur zrigh ansi d kkigh	I don't know where I am from
Ur walagh anda teddugh	I don't see where I am going
Mi ikkergh a d-steqsigh	Each time I ask
Adafagh lihala tlugh	The answer is blurred
Amzun seg genni d ghligh	As if I fell from the sky
Ccah deg-i mi t ttugh	That serves me right since I forget

Ben Mohamed, "Muqlagh"

The two social and cultural movements that emerged in the 1980s in France and Algeria, those of the Berbers and of the Beurs, were initially motivated by different dynamics and agendas. The two groups went through different experiences and different social processes, and they developed separately. However, although these two struggles evolved three years apart, apparently unaware of each other, they nonetheless share several important similarities. First, there were youth movements. In Algeria, the Berber movement was composed of university and high school students and, later, in a more diffuse way, the rest of the Berber population of Kabylia. In France, it was the work of youths from marginalized neighborhoods, where everyday life was unbearable. In both countries, the anger had been brewing for years and finally surfaced after a single incident (the cancellation of a lecture on Berber poetry in Algeria, and a violent, racist crime in France). Another similarity involves the claims brought forward by both groups. They both demanded justice, equality, and basic human rights (such as the right to exist free of fear), and they state respect for a different culture[138]—as well as democracy, in the case of Algeria. Both groups called on their respective

nation-states, which had long disenfranchised a whole segment of the population, to end the long era of political and social exclusion. Moreover, both movements emerged from the same socioeconomic background: in Kabylia, the youth and the general Kabyle population were from a peasant background; in France, the youth of Algerian descent were mostly from the working class. And finally there is the fact that Berbers (or people of Berber origin) comprised a strong presence in both movements. It is this group of people that will be reconnected beyond the generational, linguistic, and cultural differences, beyond war experiences and the Mediterranean Sea, through the powerful appeal of modern popular music.[139]

Berber modern popular music is informed by traditional Berber song and poetry, although it also departs from the traditional songs and poems. In the past in Algeria, traditional Berber poetry has usually been the means to convey information, as well as political and social concerns. There were songs of resistance since the middle of the nineteenth century.[140] Poets would fix each conflict in song; in this way, the events endured, were diffused, and were remembered. During the war of liberation, songs also helped foment nationalism.[141] Modern technology, especially the proliferation of cassette recordings, greatly increased the songs' reach and efficacy. Berber musicians who were mobilized by the Berber Spring radically transformed the traditional Berber song. The new generation of Kabyle artists, who were born and raised in Algeria, strove to modernize the music. In the past, their elders were strongly influenced by Middle Eastern music, especially during the 1950s, when many young Kabyle artists (Kamal Hamadi and Cherif Kheddam, for example) imitated their Egyptian counterparts (especially Farid El-Atrache). Things started to change in the 1960s, and by the early 1970s the break was final. Ethnomusicologist Mehenna Mahfoufi explains that the violins, the string bass, the two cellos, the *ney* flute, the *kanoun* zither, and the lute (*oud*) were simply replaced by an acoustic guitar, an accompanying guitar, or a *mandole* and a *derbouka*.[142] Thus, new artists such as Meksa, Idir, Menad, Chenoud, and Brahim Izri, to cite only a few, turned their backs on Middle Eastern influences and worked on the foundation of a new Kabyle music, partially Westernizing it in the process. This transformation probably also helped with the connection with the Berber-Beur youth in France.

Not only did these new Kabyle artists modernize their music (by, for example, removing old and adding new instruments and creating new rhythms and melodies that are more contemporary), they also had a different attitude toward their culture. They wanted to defend it, preserve it, and revitalize it. This ideological posture did not prevent these champions from

working on the language and the literary aspect of their creations, for these songs were infused with a powerful poetical dimension that merits further examination and discussion. The Kabyle song of the 1970s is a protest song that asserts the rights of the Berbers to their heritage and their language and declares the end of repression and the end of the shame associated with being Berber. Some songs are hymns about Berber history and culture (Meksa, Menad, Madjid Soula). Consider this excerpt from a song titled "Brigh ad cnugh" (I want to sing) by Madjid Soula:

Brigh ad cnugh acuwiq nat zik nni
Xas aâaden lawam gwagi d mazal ur yeghli
Amek ar samhagh ma sumhagh ulac dggi
Brigh as slen wigad mazal ur sen sli
Cnigh ur tt thigh ara gar u Russi d u Rumi
Mazal ad cnugh sut ad yawed igenni

(I want to sing our old songs
Although time has passed, at least what is left has not been forgotten
How can I forgive? If I forgive I am worthless
I want those who did not hear them to hear them
I sing without shame among Russians and French
And I will continue. My voice will reach the skies.)

Soula's melodies combine past and present to assert the place of Berber culture among others in the world. The energy and self-proclaimed pride created by a reaction formation could be summarized in the formula "Berber is beautiful!" Dissent is at the core of the new Kabyle song, so much so that Kateb Yacine dubbed some of its singers (Matoub, Ferhat, and others) "maquisards de la chanson" (resistance fighters of music).

Revitalizing the Kabyle song, for some of its singers, also meant bringing it to the world stage. Idir, one of the icons of the Berber Spring, did just that. His hit "A Vava Inuva" came out in 1973 and became the first African international hit, along with Manu Dibango's music.[143] The song is original and inventive while deeply rooted in Kabyle folklore, a flavorful combination that made it an immense and lasting success. Idir also extended himself to other struggles by supporting grassroots social movements, such as the Beur March, and global organizations, such as Amnesty International, by singing at concerts in solidarity with humanitarian causes. Idir sang and worked with many French and international musicians and singers, including Jean-Jacques Goldmann, Maxime le Forestier, Manu Chao, Ugandan

Geoffrey Oryema, Scot Karen Matheson, the band Zebda, L'Orchestre National de Barbès, among many others, while other artists, such as Cheb Mami and Khaled, have adapted his songs.

Thus, musicians such as Idir, Djamel Allam, the band Afous (the hand), and Abranis brought this new Kabyle music onto a larger international scene and to a new audience, and in France this audience is also composed of Beurs. Hence, this new product and disposition retrieved Kabyle music from the cultural ghetto where it had been confined: cafés and small concert halls in Algerian neighborhoods in major cities, such as Paris and its suburbs. With their militancy, enthusiasm, and vitality, these artists offered the Beur generation a different outlook on their heritage, which had often been associated with misery, pain, and the lament of exile. These singers appealed to, among other audiences, the generation that was now ready to reconnect with its heritage. Importantly, these performers shared the spotlight with the first generation of Beur singers, such as Karim Kacel and the band Carte de séjour. Karim Kacel is a musician of Kabyle origin and the first Beur singer to sing his hit song "Banlieue" on French airwaves at the beginning of the 1980s. Later he would sing "La chanson du Kabyle" and "Tizi Ouzou." The band Carte de séjour was created in Lyon in 1980 with the well-known pop star Rachid Taha. The women's band Djurdjura, named after the Kabyle Mountains and formed by three sisters living in France in 1977, echoed women's struggles in France and Algeria and brought a feminist discourse to a new audience.

Radio Beur again played an important role in the new bond created by the new Kabyle song over the Mediterranean between the Beurs in France and the youth of Kabylia. As a medium that claimed the largest audience of any minority station in France, Radio Beur broadcast not only new Beur artists but also North African singers and, among the latter, lesser-known Kabyle singers.[144] Thanks to this station, which broadcast several programs on Berber culture (which raised criticism, as mentioned earlier) and which was joined by several former Berber militants, the Berber movement had access to and impacted French youth of Berber origin. This propelled these sensitized youths to get involved in Berber associations and become more militant.

Thus, the Kabyle song—taboo for a long time, confined to homes or neighborhood cafés—was brought into the limelight, thanks to artists who strove over the years to provide it with patents of nobility. In the 1970s and 1980s this goal was achieved due to innovative, clever, and determined singers.[145] The Kabyle song became a rallying point for several generations who

would gather at Kabyle concerts and other events. The new Kabyle song also built and continues to cultivate a living cultural and political bridge between France and Algeria, an aspect evident in the song itself, where the Beur predicament is addressed in music by renowned contemporary singers from Algeria, such as Takfarinas, the band Afous, Malika Domrane, and Mohamed Allaoua.

Figure 1. Algerian army tanks in Fort National for the purpose of suppressing the Kabyle rebellion in 1963. By permission of United Press International, Washington, D.C.

Figure 2. Kabyle armed uprising against the Algerian government in Azazga (Kabylia) 1963. By permission of Associated Press.

Figure 3. Kabyle soldiers, loyal to Col. Mohand Ou El Hadj against the Algerian government, guard the entrance to Tizi Ouzou (Kabylia), 1963. By permission of Associated Press.

Above: Figure 4. Concert in Vgayet stadium in the summer of 1993. Sadi, Matoub, Boudjma, Ferhat, and Benyounès. Photo kindly donated by Moh Besal.

Left: Figure 5. Matoub on crutches. Tizi Ouzou, 1989. Photo kindly donated by Moh Besal.

Figure 6. Matoub surrounded by a crowd of supporters in Tizi Ouzou stadium, 1989. Photo kindly donated by Moh Besal.

Figure 7. Portrait of Matoub on the wall of his home, Taourirt Moussa, 2012. Photo reproduced courtesy of author.

Figure 8. Entrance of Matoub's village in Taourirt Moussa. 2012. Photo reproduced courtesy of author.

Figure 9. Ghiles, a Kabyle youth, wears a T-shirt asking for justice for Matoub. The author met Ghiles during the annual pilgrimage to Azru N'Thur in the village of Aït Adella in July 2012. Ghiles kindly agreed to be photographed. Photo reproduced courtesy of author.

4

Rebels in Print and Song

Tahar Djaout, Matoub Lounès, and the Algerian Berber Movement at the End of the Twentieth Century

Mettons à contribution tous nos outils—si dérisoires soient-ils—pour repousser le silence, car ceux qui nous ont quittés ont peiné, leur vie durant, pour vaincre les mutismes et les aphasies.

(Let's use everything at our disposal—however pathetic that may be—to fight off silence, because those who have left us have striven throughout their life to vanquish mutism and aphasia.)

Tahar Djaout

This voice from the grave urges itself on our hearing. For let no one be in any doubt—the life-and-death discourse of the twenty-first century is unambiguously the discourse of fanaticism and intolerance.

Wole Soyinka

Xas idja ljehd ighalen-iw, mazal sut-iw ad i baâazaq az d slen.

(Though I have no more strength in my limbs, my voice will continue to rumble and they will hear it.)

Matoub Lounès

This chapter is a discussion of two major figures of the Algerian Berber cultural and intellectual scene in the 1990s during the Algerian Civil War: Tahar Djaout and Matoub Lounès.[1] They represent two Berber visions of the end of the millennium in Algeria's cultural life. They also represent turmoil in its urban and global context and, importantly, *within* and *without* the Berber village. Although both fought for the same objectives—a more open, democratic, and secular society—Matoub sang for, and from within, the Berber village, whereas Djaout wrote on the movement, projecting his textual voice outward. These two figures turn out to be complementary to each other.

In his articles and creative works, Tahar Djaout, a poet, novelist, and journalist, denounced the Algerian government for its corruption and lack of democracy and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, all of which, he argued, were necessarily linked. Djaout was a gifted writer, although he wrote in French, which is still construed by some in Algeria as a way to impose an alienated, Western vision of the world onto an Algerian readership. Indeed, one might think that suspicion regarding the loyalty of francophone writers is outdated, but these misgivings and reservations keep resurfacing. The capacity of francophone literature to express an authentic aspect of North African identity is still questioned, as illustrated by the harsh comments made by Tahar Ouettar (one of the most important figures of Arabic literature from Algeria) after Djaout's assassination by Islamist terrorists in 1993: Ouettar solemnly declared to the BBC that Djaout's death was a loss for his family, his wife, and . . . France. Ouettar added that francophone intellectuals should fit in with the traditions and customs of the Algerian people, which for Ouettar, one presumes, are exclusively Arab and Muslim. Ouettar added that he had warned Djaout to either fit in or leave the country, as if Algeria were not also Djaout's country.[2] In the same vein, there is also a trend in Arabic literature scholarship, especially in the United States, to denigrate the francophone genre of this region and deny its accomplishments and significance, designating Arabic literature the only authentic voice of North Africa.[3]

Djaout's critics came from all quarters of Algerian political life, because he was opposed to both the Algerian state—composed of traitors of the revolution, he claimed—and the Muslim fundamentalists. Djaout was assassinated in Algiers on June 2, 1993, the first of many Algerian journalists to be killed.[4]

In this chapter, I first focus on Djaout's novel *Les chercheurs d'os*, published in 1984, which concentrates on a little boy's mission to find his older brother's bones and bring them back home for proper burial. I also discuss Djaout's more enigmatic novel *L'invention du désert*, published three years later, an allegory of postindependence Algeria based on the narrative of a writer's journey. This novel continues the exploration of Algerian history initiated in *Les chercheurs d'os* and completes Djaout's literary investigation of Algeria's past and present.

Djaout's counterpart in this chapter is singer Lounès Matoub, who lived and made his music in his native village of Taourirt Moussa in the mountains of Kabylia. I trace his rise to fame from his first album in 1978, *Ay izem anda tellid* (Oh lion where are you?), to his last album in 1998, *Lettre ouverte à . . .* (Open letter to . . .), addressed to the Algerian government,

which Matoub virulently condemned. His last album includes the highly controversial parody of the Algerian national anthem that he sang in Berber. He was assassinated that same year. Matoub has become a monumental cultural figure, and not only in Algeria. In France, several streets and public spaces are named after him. In 1994, after Matoub published *Rebelle*, his autobiography, he received the Prix de la mémoire from Danielle Mitterrand, wife of the former French president. The story of Matoub's musical career is central here, for he captivated his audience in Algeria and in France.

Lounès Matoub and Tahar Djaout represent, in distinct ways, a passionate commitment to both Algeria and the Berber community, especially the Kabyles, and this is evident in much of their creative work. Born two years apart in Kabylia, one in the mountains and the other near a sea town, Djaout and Matoub were from similar backgrounds: each came from a poor family with an absent father. Matoub's father was in France, and Djaout's father died young. They also shared many Berber cultural references: poets and singers such as Si Mohand ou-Mhand, Mohamed El Hadj Al Anqa, Slimane Azem, Cheikh El Hasnaoui, and writers such as Mouloud Feraoun, the Amrouche family, and Mouloud Mammeri. Also, as emblematic rebels and opponents of a corrupt government and a murderous Islamic guerilla movement, their assassinations took place within five years of each other: Djaout in 1993, Matoub in 1998.

Moreover, both were francophone Kabyles, although one wrote in French and the other sang in Berber. This difference is fundamental, since the audience thus addressed is different, and so are the tones and forms of their work, as well as the significance of their actions. Djaout, as a journalist and writer, expressed himself in French and in writing—a medium that excludes his uneducated compatriots. On the other hand, he is accessible to the francophone and literate public inside and outside Algeria. As for Matoub, he was very much the product of the Kabyle Mountains and was eager to remain so. He sang in Berber to his Berber compatriots. Consequently, his work was not accessible or available to non-Berber speakers, and despite the publication of some of Matoub's songs in French translation, such as Yalla Seddiki's "Mon nom est combat," published in 2003, much work remains to be done in order to open up his vast musical repertoire to a larger audience.

Matoub and Djaout's literary and poetic production provides invaluable insights into Algeria's cultural life. They both lived through the Berber Spring of 1980 and then through the 1988 uprising. They lived through the cancellation of the Algerian elections in 1991 that brought about the Algerian Civil War, in which 150,000 died. Today, more than twenty years later,

the violence is not yet totally eradicated and other forms of violence have emerged. Still, during these trying years, Matoub and Djaout were influential and productive cultural figures. In addition to their literary and poetic production, each in his own way was actively involved in opposing religious intolerance, violence, repression, and authoritarianism.

Tahar Djaout is one of the founders of the weekly periodical *Ruptures*, which first appeared in January 1993. It was intended to bring a different voice to the monovocal cultural scene that had prevailed in Algeria since independence.[5] Through his role in the newspaper and the publication of his own articles, Djaout actively participated in the contemporary Algerian debate about politics and cultural life. The name of his newspaper, *Ruptures*, suggests currents in French Marxism of the 1960s and 1970s—Althusser, for example—though it definitely signaled exactly what is stated, a break from single-party rule and resistance to the silencing of voices that do not accord with the FLN party. The newspaper's objective was to articulate a new vision for Algeria.

Matoub's autobiography, published in 1995 in France, has a similarly provocative title, *Rebelle*, although it offers some insight into the origin of his lifelong revolt as such, not just against the Algerian government and Islamists. Early on, Matoub had trouble at school, for he could not accept the strict principles and rules of Algerian primary education. It is therefore not surprising that as a young boy, he already felt denied, rejected, and felt himself the victim of what he saw as blatant injustice by the state authorities. Fortunately, Matoub acquired a guitar, learned to play, and started to write and sing his own songs. His lyrics were nourished by the experiences of a young man living in the mountains of Kabylia in the 1980s. Soon it became clear that his experiences were not unique to him but reflected those of a large segment of the youth in Kabylia. Matoub's claim for the recognition of his language and history, his criticism of religious piety and the political regime, and his casual ways and free spirit made him a major figure on Algeria's cultural scene.

Tahar Djaout: Out of the Berber Village

> Ma tête est semblable à ces outres où les indiens transportent au gré de leurs migrations, les os de leurs ancêtres.[6]
>
> (My head is like those gourds used by Indians to transport the bones of their ancestors wherever their migratory path takes them.)

Tahar Djaout was born on January 11, 1954, in the small village of Oulkhou, near the sea town of Azzefoun in rural Kabylia, but early on he left his village for Algiers, where he lived most of his life until his death. Djaout's first voyage outside of the village, the initial break, was critical for bringing about a rupture not only from the locus of safety and familiarity but also from childhood. Childhood for Djaout was the time and site of spiritual purity, akin to an Edenic paradise, the loss of which entails a sense of dispossession and lack.[7] The latter is an all-pervading trope in Berber literature. These feelings are what we commonly call alienation and, I argue, were triggered by the journey out of the village to the capital city, Algiers.

Djaout's move to Algiers was important for his personal and intellectual formation. He eventually earned a BA in mathematics, which he intended to use to make a living while pursuing poetry. He did not have to use his degree, because he started working as a journalist at the Algerian newspaper *El Moudjahid*, from 1976 to 1977, and then joined the staff of the newspaper *Algérie-Actualité*, where he worked from 1980 to 1992. In an article written in homage to Djaout, journalist Amar Naït Messaoud reminisces about how every Thursday he and his friends would wait impatiently to read the articles by Djaout and his colleagues in *Algérie-Actualité*. These articles were an "oxygen bottle" in the "ambient gloominess of the culture of the one-party." People appreciated Djaout's refined and distinguished pen. Djaout, declares Messaoud, taught his readers to read "between the lines, behind the lines, and below the lines."[8] It is with great pleasure that people read Djaout's articles on culture and society, as well as his interviews with major intellectuals and writers, such as Adonis, Albert Cossery, Mouloud Mammeri, and Mostefa Lacheraf.

After the protests and demonstrations of October 1988, the Algerian government's legitimacy was questioned. In response, a new constitution was brought forth in 1989 that legalized opposition parties. This breeze of freedom in Algeria generated a multiplicity of political parties and publications. Djaout, Abdelkrim Djaad, and Arezki Metref, friends and former colleagues from *Algérie-Actualité*, took advantage of this democratic opening to launch a new weekly magazine, *Ruptures*. The short-lived publication, which lasted from January to August 1993 and was headed by Djaout, was skillfully crafted and revealed the team's intellectual sagacity and its attachment to democratic values. In the first issue, Djaout writes:

> L'Algérie vit la période des combats décisifs ou chaque silence, chaque indifférence, chaque abdication, chaque pouce de terrain cédé peuvent s'avérer fatals. . . . C'est l'autre Algérie que nous défendons quant

> à nous, l'Algérie de la tolérance, de la générosité et de l'ouverture—mais aussi de l'intransigeance lorsque certaines valeurs sont mises à mal.[9]
>
> (These are decisive battles for Algeria: every bit of silence, indifference, abdication, every inch of soil given could be fatal. . . . For our part, we are defending the other Algeria, the Algeria of tolerance, generosity, and openness—but also of intransigence when certain values are put in jeopardy.)

Djaout's concern for history and memory, which will be discussed below, is already present in his journalistic work when he undertakes to familiarize Algerians with their own ignored artists and intellectuals: filmmakers, painters, photographers, and writers. Week after week, declares Michel-Georges Bernard, Algeria had an appointment with itself. Algeria learned about itself and its recent past and opened itself to the lively plurality of its present.[10] Djaout's letter to Mouloud Mammeri, after the latter's death in February 1989, exemplifies this effort to revisit history, an endeavor clearly present in his fiction. In this letter, Djaout recounts that when the death of Mouloud Mammeri was announced on TV, he realized that it was the second time the Algerian TV mentioned the name of one of the most accomplished Algerian intellectuals. The only other time was to insult Mammeri in 1980. Algerian TV, Djaout observes, had neither documents nor films of the deceased to show the viewers; yet it had kilometers of film on mediocre intellectuals who were at the service of the power in place.[11]

Despite his career and success as a journalist, Djaout always insisted on the predominance of poetry over any other form of intellectual activity (journalism or fiction) in his life.[12] Just like mathematics, which he thought would free him from material contingencies, his career as a literary critic, far from being a vocation, was merely fortuitous.[13] Indeed, Djaout started his literary career with a collection of poems titled *Solstice barbelé*, published in Quebec in 1975, followed by *L'Arche à vau-l'eau*, published in Paris in 1978. He was twenty when he started writing his first novel, *L'exproprié*, published in Algiers in 1981 and deeply influenced by surrealism and containing strongly poetic prose. Djaout also published a collection of short stories in 1984, *Les rets de l'oiseleur*, that continues his creative work on language and lyric prose. But it was as a novelist that Djaout established himself as the leader of the new generation of Algerian writers.

In his novels Djaout examines his relationship to writing, often through autobiographically oriented narration that includes the exploration of childhood. He also addresses the question of writing Algerian history while

creating a new space or territory for an Algerian literary expression. Here, I focus on two novels concerning Algerian history, *Les chercheurs d'os* and *L'invention du désert.* The latter most directly addresses the process of writing history and writing novels in postcolonial Algeria, although it was a thought process that Djaout had started with *Les chercheurs d'os*. Like Assia Djebar before him, though with a different take, Djaout becomes a historian-writer and throughout the narrative explores history using the rich and complex metaphor of bones and the desert.

The travel motif, an autobiographical reference for Djaout, appears in all of his novels, but *Les chercheurs d'os* specifically focuses on a protagonist's departure from and return to the village. In this novel an unnamed child, accompanied by a family member, leaves to search for the bones of his older brother, who died during the Algerian war of independence. Their mission is to bring the brother's bones back to the village and give him a proper burial, but the voyage turns into a different quest that radically changes the child and his traveling companion. They had left to set history straight, to put order into it, in the sense that they were to bring the dead to where he belonged—namely, to his family and village—and to thereby close this chapter of the family and national history. Instead, they come back with new questions about themselves, about the dead, and about history in general.

In this bildungsroman, where the main character learns what is outside the village and discovers his own place in postindependence Algeria, the question of history is fundamentally linked to the intimate and personal history of the narrator. One set of questions haunting the child concerns the legitimacy of the trip. Why bring those bones back? For whom? If his brother had the choice, would he not prefer to remain where he was, given his own particular trajectory out of the village? Another set of questions is more philosophically oriented. What does this mission mean in relation to the way Algerian history has been told or written? Are a lot of bones brought back from their resting places to fulfill the agendas of the living? Is there a way to write history that will let the dead speak—the way the bones rattle in the bag when the child and his companion return home? The pair does bring bones back to the village, though it is not clear that they are actually the bones of the brother. Most importantly, they return burdened, their heads and shoulders heavy with questions.

The Invention of the Desert

L'invention du désert is a puzzling novel about a writer's journey to several countries to write the history of the Almoravid dynasty and Ibn Toumert.

However, the project proves to be impossible; the narrative compensates for this with imagined events and develops an autobiographical quality. This enigmatic allegory of postindependence Algeria continues Djaout's reflection on Algerian history that he initiated in *Les chercheurs d'os*.

L'invention du désert is a reflection on both Algerian and, more generally, North African history and on the narrator's life and memory; the link between the two is represented by Ibn Toumert and the narrator's own ancestor. At times, the narrator feels very close to both figures, just as he feels strongly about Algerian history. However, he also explores ways to free himself from the weight of both. The novel investigates ways to constructively maintain a link to the past while keeping some distance from it. The allegory of the desert helps us envision this innovative relationship to one's past and to one's national history. The ultrasensitive notions of identity and history are discussed in the novel in a nondefinite and nonlinear way. The text creatively explores both notions, considering their instability, fluctuation, and ephemeral qualities. Time is also collapsed; the narrative voice itself is unstable and indeterminate. The voice of the unnamed narrator shifts from the first-person account to the second-person *tu* and the third-person *sa*, and moves from ancient time to his childhood, to the present, and even to the future.[14] A good example appears on the last page of the novel: the narrator comes back to his village and sees a child holding his bird traps. The description of this child is entangled with that of the narrator's own daughter frolicking among the trees and with that of himself, reflecting upon his return to these familiar surroundings. It then becomes clear that the child is none other than the narrator himself as a little boy.

In this novel, we discover Djaout's thoughts and beliefs about the Berber movement within the Algerian national framework. The allegory of the novel demonstrates his position that any communal identity must be construed as a living and developing phenomenon and must remain free from a fixed historical discourse and from rigid boundaries and determinations, all of which have been at the heart of the political and ideological discourse of postindependence Algeria.

L'invention du désert is Djaout's most original and polished novel. Also, more so than in his journalism, it is here in a creative text that we find Djaout's thoughts on Algeria's national situation (and the way history is used in this context) allegorized with reference to the sun and the desert, an overdetermined use of figurative language. The sun, for example, reminds us of Algeria's "sun poet," Jean Sénac.[15] Interestingly, in homage to Sénac, Djaout wrote a poem titled "Soleil bafoué" (in *Solstice barbelé*), and later he wrote "Voyage dans le soleil" in homage to another revolutionary artist, the

Algerian painter Mohammed Khadda. In an article on Tahar Djaout and an Algerian painting titled *The Invention of the Gaze*, Michel-Georges Bernard cites one of Djaout's first poems where the poet expresses a commitment to freedom, which is akin to the rays of the sun: "Je suis de L'AUTRE RACE celle des hommes qui portent jusqu'aux tréfonds de leurs neurones des millénaires de soleil" (I am of the OTHER RACE, that of men who carry in the deepest of their nerve cells millennia of suns). Indeed, Bernard speaks of the intention of Djaout's poetry to announce the new face of "l'homme solaire," the solar man to be invented.[16] The poet from time immemorial has been referred to as the light that guides people. Djaout construes the poet—in this particular instance, the poet-as-intellectual—as a person who, free of inhibitions, prejudices, and limits, carries a light within to guide his people. In an interview, he declares,

> Seul un intellectuel indépendant peut transcender les tabous, les balises qui se dressent constamment sur son chemin, l'empêchant d'éclairer le monde à l'aide de sa propre lumière.[17]
>
> (Only an independent intellectual can transcend taboos, the signposts along the road that prevent him from shining his own light onto the world.)

So the "solar" man should be an "enlightened" person, and the sun and the desert affirm his creation. On the other hand, the sun and the desert refer not only to energy, creation, renewal, and discovery but also to disintegration, destruction, collapse, and loss, all paradoxes that Djaout explores in *L'invention du désert*. In this novel the narrator-writer claims that the desert has inhabited him since indeterminate times: "le désert m'habite et m'illumine depuis des temps indéterminés."[18] The two verbs *habiter* (inhabit) and *illuminer* (enlighten) convey an interesting idea here. If we follow the metaphor, the desert represents transformation and boundlessness (here/there, life/death, present/past), and Djaout considers these attributes to exist both within and outside of the narrator, guiding him. And so the desert reveals (illuminates) the truth that is already within us (inhabiting us). In the same way, the past is always within us, mediating the present and showing us how to interpret the future. There is no pure moment in the present, so Djaout abolishes the frontiers of time and space: *L'invention du désert* depicts Ibn Toumert, a Berber religious figure from the Middle Ages, riding the Parisian subway. Ibn Toumert the character is alive for the narrator and lives with him; at some level he is the narrator's alter ego.

In *L'invention du désert*, there is a young man who shows the road to the

caravan in the desert. The "enlightened one" carries an extra burden with him:

> Il y a toujours dans le groupe en marche (en fuite?) un jeune homme à l'esprit délétère qui porte, en plus du poids du ciel affalé sur le désert, une peine supplémentaire. . . . Il connait déjà la mer, la vastitude de l'eau dansante et l'écartèlement des rivages. Une solitude l'enveloppe, lui tisse une aura d'étrangeté, l'exclut de la caravane. C'est pourtant à lui de trouver l'eau, la parole qui revigore, c'est à lui de révéler le territoire—de l'inventer au besoin. C'est à lui de relater l'errance, de déjouer les pièges de l'aphasie, de tendre l'oreille aux chuchotements, de nommer les terres traversées. . . . Il existe un jeune homme dissipé mais qui guide (malgré lui?) la caravane. Ses errances à lui sont sans remède, sans la récompense de la halte bue comme une bienfaisante gorgée d'eau. Ce qu'il sillonne, ce n'est pas le désert de sable et de pierres tranchantes, mais le désert périlleux de sa tête.[19]
>
> (There is always among the group on the march [on the lam?] a young man with a deleterious spirit carrying on his shoulders an extra sorrow, besides the weight of the sky slumped on the desert. . . . He already knows the sea, the vastness of the dancing waters and the forceful separation of the shores. Solitude surrounds him, weaves around him an aura of strangeness, and excludes him from the caravan. But it is up to him to find water, the right word that lifts spirits; it is up to him to reveal the territory—to invent it, if need be. It is up to him to recount the story of wandering, to avoid the traps of aphasia, to listen to the murmurs, to name the lands crossed. . . . A young distracted man guides [reluctantly?] the caravan. His own wanderings are without remedy, without the reward of the rest stop welcomed like a blessed gulp of water. He crisscrosses not the desert of sand and cutting rocks but the perilous desert of his mind.)

The young man is burdened with an impossible quest best compared to the flight of birds ("C'est pourquoi il a choisi . . . d'exprimer cette trajectoire . . . par la migration des oiseaux").[20] The description of this young man fits Djaout's definition of the independent poet-intellectual mentioned earlier. His spirit is dangerous; he keeps his distance from the group and prefers solitude. Still, he is the one who shows the way for the caravan; he is the one who finds the water and the word to fortify his companions. The writing of history and its complexities appears among the young man's

other talents and aptitudes: he is also a cartographer (the one "to reveal the territory"), a writer-creator ("to invent it, if need be"), and a historian (he is the one to "recount the story of wandering" and "name the lands"), all of which are needed to escape the void and voicelessness. Escaping the void and the silence created by fear, oppression, or suppression is critical for Djaout, so much so that the famous quote on silence by Palestinian poet Samih El Kacem was wrongly attributed to Djaout: "Silence is death, and if you keep quiet, you die. If you speak, you die. So speak and die!" ("Le silence, c'est la mort, et toi, si tu te tais, tu meurs et si tu parles, tu meurs. Alors dis et meurs!")

Elsewhere, Djaout goes further and speaks of the responsibility one has to always push away the silence, if only for the memory of those who passed away and fought to speak:

> Mettons à contribution tous nos outils . . . pour repousser le silence car ceux qui nous ont quitté ont peiné, leur vie durant, pour vaincre les mutismes et les aphasies.[21]
>
> (Let's make use of all our tools . . . to push back the silence because those who passed away struggled all their lives to vanquish silence and aphasia.)

Silence, therefore, is not an acceptable option. But while there is little doubt that history needs to be rethought and rewritten—co-opted as it has been by the ruling regime and private interests (as seen in *Les chercheurs d'os*)—the feasibility of such a project remains questionable. Is it possible to re-write history, and if so, how?

In *L'invention du désert*, Djaout tackles the history of the Berbers through the unnamed narrator's writing of the history of a Berber dynasty, the Almoravid, for an editor who wants to start a scholarly book series on medieval Islam.[22] While working on his project, the narrator travels to different places (Paris, Biskra, Djedda, Sanaa) and is haunted by two characters: a mysterious unnamed ancestor and Ibn Toumert, the Berber religious leader who brought down the Almoravid dynasty. The novel is further complicated by the incorporation into the narrative of references to the narrator-writer's current and past life and an interior monologue. Though the novel also takes place in other geographical locations (mountainous regions, seaport cities), the desert is a central motif in the novel. With its boundless frontiers, its scorching sun that diminishes one's capacity to think, its destructive capacities, its strengths and mysteries, the deserts that the narrator

crosses are a powerful allegory for change and renewal and are used both to examine North African history with a different lens and to reflect differently upon the narrator's own life.

L'invention du désert calls to mind *La traversée*, a novel written by Mouloud Mammeri a few years earlier and published in 1982. In Mammeri's novel, Mourad, a journalist, travels to the desert to write about the nomads, but the journey into the desert radically transforms him. He becomes conscious that his life and the country he lives in are a mere simulacrum. Mourad returns to his village in Kabylia and withdraws from the world. Djaout's novel seems to build on Mammeri's narrative, but whereas Mourad leaves the examination and interpretation of the world to ideologists and his journalist colleagues, Djaout's narrative offers an alternative to renunciation, albeit one that is at times impenetrable and confusing. Consider, for example, the desperation of the narrator as he realizes how history escapes him despite his literary efforts, and how even Ibn Toumert, his historical character, is able to break away and leave.[23] The example of Tehouda as a site where the narrative takes place illustrates this predicament. Tehouda is a significant place in Berber history—and, thus, in Algerian and North African history—because it is associated with celebrated figures such as the Berber queen Kahina and the Berber king Koceila. The latter resisted the Arab conquest in 683 and defeated Okba Ibn Nafi at that very site. Still, when the narrator reaches Tehouda, the location does not even have a sign to acknowledge its existence, its place on the map, in a recognized geographical space and place:

> Pour ceux qui inventorient les localités, Tehouda n'est pas un lieu d'histoire, elle n'est même pas un lieu tout court. Tehouda n'existe pas. Pourtant c'est là que l'histoire du Maghreb s'est jouée.[24]
>
> (For those who make an inventory of places, Tehouda is not a place of history; it is not even a place. Tehouda does not exist. But this is where the history of the Maghreb played out.)

The narrator, a writer, must deal with a history that lacks such essential characteristics for textual representation as historical documentation and points of reference. North African history is unstable and volatile, just as its frontiers are as undetectable as the ebb and flow of the sand dunes, for history here is always fleeting ("toujours fuyante") and impossible to immobilize ("impossible à fixer").[25] According to critic Réda Bensmaïa, this evanescence signals the impossibility of the narrator's enterprise. Bensmaïa calls it the "unnarratable itself."[26] He perceives a conflict between the

"pedagogical enterprise of telling the story of the nation as if it were able to be narrated" and "the performative endeavor, which is that of writing the nation and which turns out to be, above all, the bearer of a compulsion to repeat history that at every moment risks reducing the whole project to a cacophonic mess or perhaps even madness."[27] Cacophony? Madness? Does this mean that the narrator's endeavor is doomed? Not quite.[28] The narrator is conscious that his writing project is fraught with questions and instability, like the Koranic tablets at school, on which letters are constantly erased and others take their place the next day.[29] The narrator wonders "Es-tu assez fort pour recommencer? Pour rebaliser par l'écrit des trajectoires vouées à être blanches?"[30] (Are you strong enough to start again? To remap in written trajectories that are bound to remain white?). The answer is yes, for despite the impossibility of totally recovering one's memory or the nation's history, Djaout's work creates meaning; more importantly, Djaout invents a language and a territory for this new history that is contained in the novel itself. He also provides a new discourse on Berber identity, which before had been limited to identity claims.

Kabyle Identity Subverted

The creation of new territory and the writing and rewriting of Berber history are realized through multiple strategies. One entails weaving into the narration legendary tales, fantasy, memory, and reality while abolishing all barriers among these different realms. In addition, Djaout inserts subversive elements into the discourse on Berber identity, which run throughout the novel. One example is the subversion of a virtually sacred aspect of Berber culture—namely, storytelling. In *L'invention du désert*, the narrator recounts evenings with his mother, who would tell him stories about a family ancestor. The narrator's ancestor, on his way to Mecca, crossed several deserts and came back a year later profoundly transformed. The pilgrim returns having lost his voice:

> Ainsi, il devint aphone. Il dit un jour à ma mère que les oiseaux parlaient pour lui, que les cigales criaient pour lui, que les criquets chantaient pour lui et qu'il n'avait plus rien à ajouter à tout cela.[31]
>
> (And he lost his voice. He told my mother one day that the birds talked for him, that the cicadas clamored for him, that the crickets sang for him, and that he had nothing to add.)

The ancestor recounted his pilgrimage and many other stories to keep his granddaughter (the narrator's mother) close by, for in his old age he was

almost blind and she was his precious guide. The oral transmission continues with the granddaughter telling the stories to her son, the narrator. Interestingly, this transmission of familial and communal connections and culture takes place during the ritual of storytelling, which in the 1980s was celebrated in Idir's hit song "A vava inuva" as an essential marker of Kabyle life. Indeed, during the long and harsh winters in the mountainous region of Kabylia, storytelling brings the family together around the fire to listen to the elders. This is a convivial and reassuring time, and it provides an entry into an imaginary world far from the hardships of life in Kabylia. This unique experience was (and remains) for many Kabyle adults one of their fondest childhood memories. Idir's song captures this experience and makes it a quintessential Kabyle activity. The centrality of storytelling in Berber culture is also present in the film *La Montagne de Baya*, where the director, Azzedine Meddour, draws particular attention to Berber traditions and the Berbers' polytheistic past. One scene shows an old woman narrating the story of Anzar, the god of rain, to a group of children sitting around her. She starts the tale by saying, "Once upon a time, when gods had human faces. . . ." And so these tales paradoxically involve the suspension of time while conveying identity markers, rooted in the past, that mediate the present. In *L'invention du désert*, through the sequence on the storytelling, Djaout substitutes self-doubt and historical ambiguity (the story is about the narrator's odd ancestor and his peregrinations) to the convivial and comforting moment of storytelling, full of enchantment and wonder. He challenges the framework, the content, and the permanence of this moment that is quasi-sacred for Kabyles, even though today the ritual is far less prevalent, if not nearly extinct. Indeed, within the framework of the folktale, the narrator's mother inserts stories from her grandfather that are linked to her own memory and to the grandfather's need to keep someone close to him. For the narrator, his ancestor was a hero, so the narrator identifies with him. These stories made a long-lasting impression on the child:

> La mère se mettait à parler de La Mecque en commençant par évoquer ce parent jadis en pèlerinage à dos de chameau en traversant des pays étranges et des déserts sans fin où le soleil descendait si bas qu'il venait effleurer les cranes de ses flammèches aiguës. On avait beau se couvrir la tête, empiler dessus des chiffons, elle se mettait à bouillir comme si elle était plongée dans un brasero: les oreilles percevaient des bruits inédits, les yeux voyaient des choses insensées. Il était difficile de savoir si l'on était en état de rêve ou d'éveil.[32]

(The mother started talking about Mecca by conjuring up this forebear who, a long time ago, made the pilgrimage on camelback, crossing strange countries and endless deserts where the sun came so low that it caressed the skulls with sharp flames. Cover your head, pile up fabric as you may, your head started boiling as if it were dipped into a brazier: the ears heard novel noises; the eyes saw senseless things. It was hard to know whether you were dreaming or awake.)

This fantastic journey between dream and reality caused the boy to dream of Arabia and swallows, for his mother assured him that these birds were flying toward Mecca, the house of God, when they left in the fall season. This childhood dream is important, for it participates in the process of invention of the desert for the young boy. The child construes this story as a traditional tale where the hero is his ancestor. He identifies with his ancestor—something that will haunt him in his adult life—and declares that sometimes he wondered whether it was he who was in fact the hero or his ancestor:

L'enfant percevait confusément les choses et les paroles: il ne savait pas très bien si c'était de lui qu'il s'agissait ou de l'ancêtre, si c'était lui qui vivait les événements ou s'il les regardait simplement se dérouler devant lui, extérieurs à lui.[33]

(The child, befuddled, perceived things and words: he didn't really know if they happened to him or to the forebear, if he was living these events or if he simply watched them unfold in front of his eyes, outside of himself.)

The story of the ancestor contains all the elements of a conventional (Berber) tale, wherein the hero, putting his life in danger, goes through many trials and succeeds in reaching the goal, here the house of God, and returns to live happily ever after, or almost. However, the story of the ancestor is also unconventional, even subversive, in that it runs contrary to certain radical voices within the Berber movement that deny any significant connection with Islam. For the narrator, the ancestor's pilgrimage to Mecca becomes a personal marker in his life. The figure of the ancestor is crucial, for he represents a part of the narrator's personal history, which is entangled with the country's history.

But Djaout's novel also builds upon a young Berber literary tradition insofar as the narrator's childhood presents familiar and recognizable characteristics to the Berber reader. The text portrays a poor little Kabyle boy

who grows up in a beautiful Kabyle mountain setting, surrounded by its unparalleled fauna and flora, living with a mysterious mother (who has strange visions) and a distant father, who lives and works in France. These elements are reminiscent of Mouloud Feraoun's now classic novel *Le fils du pauvre*. However, this evocation of a past that anchors the child in a culture that is essentially Kabyle is disrupted by visions and dreams of the Orient (i.e., the Other) transmitted by the sacrosanct source and carrier of Kabyle culture, the mother, as well as by the origin of the narrator's ancestor and the crime he committed in his youth.

Upon his return from Mecca, the ancestor is more subdued, tolerant, and gentle, a change interpreted as a result of the wisdom he acquired in Mecca; he thus becomes a well-respected elder in the village. But this idyllic image is obscured by the revelation of his origin and crime, which points to another disruption in the traditional Kabyle narrative. At age seventeen, the ancestor killed a young man and had to flee his home. He found refuge in the mountains, where he learned the language of the inhabitants and settled in a village:

> Au lieu de retourner dans sa région, il gagna le pays des montagnes, y acquis la confiance des villageois dont il dut d'abord apprendre la langue, s'établit sur leurs terres et y fonda un foyer. . . . Les montagnards savaient juste qu'il venait du pays plus plat ou l'on parle une langue différente, plus proche de la langue du Livre—sans être tout à fait celle du Livre.[34]
>
> (Instead of returning to his region, he headed for the mountains, gained the trust of its inhabitants whose language he had to learn, settled on their land, and built his home there. . . . The highlanders knew only that he had come from the flat country where people spoke a different language, closer to that of the Book—without being exactly that of the Book.)

And so we learn that the narrator's ancestor is Arab, information that introduces plurality and that is as significant here as the discovery of Nedjma's mysterious and multiple origins in Kateb Yacine's novel *Nedjma*.[35]

While Kabyles, in response to the postindependence Arabo-Islamic dominant discourse, have defended the motto "our ancestors, the Berbers," Djaout offers as the main character of his novel a Berber of Arab descent, thereby creating a new Berber discourse on Algerian identity. Since Algeria's independence, Berbers have opposed the successive Algerian governments,

which have claimed that Algeria is Muslim and Arab.[36] In response, Berbers have continued to claim their Berberness and their historical and cultural specificity: a Berber minority seeks recognition from an Arab majority. Djaout turns this on its head: in *L'invention du désert*, the narrator's ancestor is an Arab who learns to speak Berber and becomes a respected member of his village community. Instead of having Berbers resist dissolution into the sanctified Arabo-Islamic culture or resist as a minority the dominant discourse, Djaout uncovers an alternative, or simply a different reality: Berberness is the base, the bedrock, on which the cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of Algeria (and North Africa) can exist and flourish. Indeed, the Berber village, which in Kabyle mythology is often portrayed as the last stronghold of Berberness, is presented as a site of multiplicity and diversity. This new take on the Berber village was initiated in *Les chercheurs d'os*, where the village is first described as oppressive and paralyzing, a place that one needs to leave to best reconcile with it—the link to the outside is crucial to its survival. In *L'invention du désert*, the Berber village welcomes the ancestor, who is an outsider. The theme of the integration of difference or of the enemy (who can be from within, too) in Kabyle villages is not new. Malek Ouary's novel *Le grain dans la meule* has such an occurrence.[37] In *L'invention du désert*, the life of the ancestor prior to his settlement in the village, far from being obliterated, is kept alive in the dreams of the little boy and later on in the narrator's adulthood, in his professional life (writing about Ibn Toumert, for example) and in his own trip to Mecca. The original idea that Djaout works with here through the enigmatic ancestor is that Algeria, despite all its masks, is first and foremost Berber, with numerous foreign and outside influences.[38] These new elements point toward a rereading of Algerian and, more generally, North African history.

The narrator's quest, which takes him across deserts and through different cities, is an allegory of a search for one's individual and national history, two quests that are tied together in the text. The goal of this quest, however, is not to preserve and build upon the newly founded history but to imagine a new form of history that is flexible and dynamic. It is for this reason that the choice of the desert as an allegorical space for this new history is so relevant.

The ancestor is crucial here as well, not only because he represents the narrator's link to his particular origin and childhood memories (necessary to one's construction and development of self) but also because this character represents the heavy and cumbersome history from which one

sometimes needs some distance in order to invent oneself. While on a quest to retrace the ancestor's pilgrimage to Mecca, the narrator feels smothered by this presence:

> Mais l'ancêtre n'est pas à mes côtés, n'a jamais été à mes côtés, ne sera jamais à mes côtés. Il n'est qu'une idée lointaine que je ferai peut-être un jour livresque pour qu'il soit mis fin à ses déambulations, qu'elle cesse de transhumer dans ma tête. . . . Je lui ferai le même sort qu'au trublion Ibn Toumert que je compte livrer, pieds et poings liés, à la lecture irrespectueuse, à la fringale des analystes.[39]
>
> (But the ancestor is not by my side, was never by my side, will never be by my side. He is a mere distant idea that I might transform into a book one day so to stop him from wandering about and migrating in my head. . . . The same fate awaits him as that of the troublemaker Ibn Toumert, whom I intend to turn over, bound hand and foot, to the disrespectful reader, to the raging hunger of the analysts.)

This passage expresses the narrator's frustration toward this ancestor, who, although absent and distant, invades his life ("ses déambulations . . . dans ma tête"). And what better way to eradicate or exorcize this ghostly presence than to write a book about him? Doing so would forever consign the disturbing and ubiquitous ancestor to the pages of a book, from which he will not escape. Therefore, unlike his mother, the narrator intends to write down the ancestor's story in order to stop its influence, for only in cementing and confining this story to text can the narrator channel the ancestor's disturbing presence and influence. For whether it is the personal or national history, one always needs to keep a delicate balance between the past and the present to avoid the traps of amnesia or fixation.

Ibn Toumert: The Narrator's Religious Alter Ego?

Djaout's use of history—weaving historical narrative, references, and characters into his texts—is both a stylistic technique and a pointed political tool. It is exemplified in his use of the historic figure Ibn Toumert. To review: the narrator of the novel is to write the history of the Almoravids for a new book series. Interestingly, the only constraint the editor imposes is that he must write in an impersonal style, which is impossible for the narrator, given what links the narrator to this project and to Ibn Toumert. For Djaout, this is a comment about the situation of any writer, especially in Algeria, where the personal and the political are always intertwined.[40] Because of his personal fascination with Ibn Toumert, and to make a point,

the narrator goes against the grain of traditional history and writes the story of the Almoravid dynasty from the perspective of those who destroyed it, particularly from the standpoint of Ibn Toumert; rather than write about a past moment of glory, he documents the destruction and dispersion of a people ("Non leur gloire, mais leur pitoyable dispersion").[41] It is important to note that both dynasties (Almoravid and Almohad) were Berber Muslim dynasties that became enemies because the Almohads, under the leadership of Ibn Toumert, became ultraorthodox and fundamentalist.

Just like the narrator's ancestor, Ibn Toumert is a constant presence in the narrator's daily life. He travels with the narrator to France and to the Middle East. Transposed into a different time and place, Ibn Toumert remains fanatic but also shows weaknesses. In France, he walks along the Champs-Elysées, rides the subway, and is scandalized by the absence of shame and decency he sees on Parisian streets, though he feels sexual desire nonetheless. Searching for his North African compatriots (Ibn Toumert was born in Morocco), he visits the North African neighborhoods of Barbès and La Goutte d'Or and ends up feeling great pity for this distressed community in exile, where, despite the crowds, solitude is ubiquitous. At the end of the day, he steps out of a bar in the nineteenth arrondissement, totally drunk.

In his historical lifetime, Ibn Toumert was, in the narrator's own words, a censor, a preacher ("prédicateur"), a *gendarme*, a police force unto himself ("corps de police"). This ultraorthodox man always carried a cane with him, which he used to discipline those he thought had been led astray from the strict path of God. His wrath was directed especially at the alcohol consumption, homosexuality, and prostitution that were open features of North African society.[42] Ibn Toumert's faith, determination, and ambition make him a remarkable historical figure. Despite, or because of, the narrator's fascination with him, the narrator wants to curtail this figure's aura. The narrator claims that believers are hopelessly naïve ("les croyants sont d'inguérissables naïfs"[43]) and casts Ibn Toumert as a fearless knight or as a charming young man spreading science and preaching the good word. Now, this is clearly a comment on fundamentalist Islam, where groups either advocate an ascetic and moralistic narrative of the life of the Prophet or develop a liberal version where Ibn Toumert—for instance, like some versions of Jesus—is cast as a revolutionary, a defender of the poor and dispossessed. Djaout, through the narrator, refuses to fall into such absolutes and apology, leaving the interpretation of Ibn Toumert's character to the reader and to scholars who will analyze him and, perhaps, finally see him as a wretched man dreaming of prophecy.[44] Through today's hermeneutics,

suggests Djaout, Ibn Toumert will be dragged off his historical pedestal and will be scrutinized. Contemporary analytical tools will reveal this persona from a new angle, uncovering repressed troubles such as paranoia, an Oedipus complex, incest, and even impotence. Ibn Toumert will reintegrate human history that is subject to reflection and questioning. Just like the ancestor, who is to be caught and confined in writing, the story of Ibn Toumert will undergo important changes. Both men will see their religious or sacred traits removed, their role downplayed, and their actions de-dramatized, to finally stand as the simple and mortal men they were.

For Djaout, the act of writing and the use of history in his fiction rehumanizes these figures, making them less mighty and dreadful. Djaout also uses humor to humble them and bring them closer to the reader, poking fun at Ibn Toumert by comparing him to Don Quixote, the epitome of fictional characters ("Don Quichotte avant Cervantès, voici tout ce qu'était Ibn Toumert"[45]). In the same context, Djaout indirectly alludes to the sacred text of Islam, which, he points out, can become an obsession for some, leading to a certain kind of reading, just as Don Quixote's excessive reading of books on chivalry and courtly romance is driven by obsession, to the disastrous exclusion of everyone around him, and to the exclusion of reality as well. Unlike the Man of La Mancha, the historical Ibn Toumert did not have an author to chronicle his travels and experiences. Now, however, the narrator hopes that by chronicling the adventures of this pious and zealous man, he will confine him to the page, fix him in time and place, and exorcize his presence from political and cultural debate today.

The narrator also wants to detach himself from Ibn Toumert. In one particularly vivid dream, Ibn Toumert visits the narrator, who tries to kill him, but each time the narrator shoots at Ibn Toumert, he realizes he has instead shot one of his own daughters, suggesting the disastrous consequences of denying, forgetting, or trying to silence history ("Tu veux me supprimer tout simplement pour n'avoir pas à parler de moi"[46]): You hurt or kill your own children. Instead, the narrator (and Djaout) advocates dealing with history in a synthetic and revolutionary way devoid of censorship and where meaning is not fixed but constantly debated. Again, this tactic is obviously a political strategy intended to dispute the use of history, especially cultural and communal history, as controlled by the state and its armed religious adversaries.

The narrator has a fascination with Ibn Toumert as a kind of "guide" who leads others on a quest. Yet it is clearly an uncomfortable fascination, for while the narrator valorizes a secular and less patriarchal guide, such as the young man who shows the way for the caravan and relieves his compatriots,

leading them toward life and allowing the word to be spoken, Ibn Toumert, the Mahdi, "the guided one," is driven by another agenda that is obviously religious and judgmental. Indeed, Ibn Toumert's role in the novel and according to historical account was to restrict life and its expression through prohibition and sanction of what he considers objectionable behavior and thoughts. Moreover, Ibn Toumert's wanderings in North Africa and the Middle East had a specific purpose: to change the world according to his strict Islamic vision, thereby imposing the word of God according to Ibn Toumert. The narrator's wanderings differ from Ibn Toumert's pious wanderings ("errance pieuse") and have no determinate goal except that of reflecting on the places visited and the people encountered. The narrator's quest for purity also differs from that of Ibn Toumert. The narrator (and Djaout) believe that purity resides in childhood ("l'utopie de la pureté—(qui) ne possède nul sanctuaire hors l'enfance"[47]), and one is left either to lament its loss or to try to recapture signs of its presence around us. Djaout chose the latter option.

By creating a space where imagination and reality, fiction and history, the personal and the national, and the self and the other can coexist and overlap and can exchange and relate, Djaout creates new territory where North African history can be written and Algerian literature can blossom. Djaout's novel highlights the importance of breaking free from permanent notions of identity (including Berber identity), from fixed historical discourse, from rigid boundaries and determinations, all of which have been at the heart of the political and ideological discourse of postindependence Algeria. This discourse, which entails exclusion and self-denial, among other evils, has led to many conflicts, not only the bloody Algerian Civil War but also the formation within the individual of a schizophrenic-like relationship to oneself and to the nation.

Matoub Lounès: The Kabyle Rebel

At a March 2010 academic conference on the Kabyle writer Mouloud Feraoun that was held in the capital of Kabylia, Tizi Ouzou (Algeria), participants were invited to visit the writer's village to pay homage to the great Algerian humanist. After a long drive up the mountains, through twisting switchbacks and steep inclines, we finally arrived at Tizi Hibel. As we stepped out of the vans and started walking in the direction of the cemetery, a familiar voice could be heard nearby. It was Matoub's voice. The voice grew louder, and when we reached the cemetery the voice was loud and

clear. The youth of the village who had learned of our coming had prepared a reception and, of course, along with the lunch they generously offered us, Matoub's music was part of the welcome ceremony. They had set up a table with loudspeakers and played Matoub's songs, especially his parody of the Algerian national anthem. Twelve years after his assassination, Matoub was still the idol of these youths, many of whom were only children when he was assassinated. It struck me then that Matoub remains the irreplaceable voice of the people, and no serious event takes place without his music.

The Creation of a Myth: Matoub Lounès, Kabylia's *Enfant Terrible*

> Imi d lulagh d aqbayli ismiw imenghi
>
> (Since I was born a Kabyle, my name is battle.)
>
> *Lounès Matoub*

Lounès Matoub was born in 1956 in the village of Taourirt Moussa in Kabylia to a family of modest means. Like Djaout, Matoub loved the Kabyle Mountains for the wild landscape and the sense of freedom they provided. Matoub was the first and only boy in his family, which probably contributed to his sense of self-worth, while the absence of his father, who was working in France, gave him greater autonomy. Perhaps it is this sense of freedom and self-confidence, acquired early, that led Matoub to develop a strong sense of independence and originality while remaining intractable in his commitments.

Matoub came a long way since his first major public appearance at the Mutualité in Paris in 1980. From the beginning, he was a controversial figure, despite the number of youths he immediately seduced. His idiosyncrasies, his vociferous attacks against his enemy, his lack of self-control, his unabashed rigidity when it came to certain subjects, and his impertinence and disrespect when it came to some Kabyle traditions or values were not appreciated by the majority of Kabyles. In a way, Matoub was the opposite of Aït Menguellet, the one singer whom Kabyles revere unequivocally and who in his lifetime has become a monument of Kabyle poetry and culture.

From early on, Matoub possessed a strong determination and ambition (personal and communal). He yearned to be a star singer and defend his culture through music. These two ambitions coalesced in the mythical figure he created and came to embody. This did not happen overnight, nor did it happen without difficulty. Although Matoub dedicated his life and energy to his passion and goal, just like heroes in folktales, he had to go through

many life-threatening ordeals to earn his status. These trials are evoked in his 1995 autobiography, whose publication not only responds to polemics around his political positions and activities but is also an act of self-creation and sets the stage for Matoub's legacy.

The biographical facts that Matoub highlights in *Rebelle* are familiar to most Kabyles who lived in postindependence Algeria. He grew up in a poor household, surrounded by beautiful mountains, where he would find refuge from the alienation he felt at school. As a boy, Matoub witnessed in 1963 the Algerian army harshly repress the Kabyles, and he later experienced racism from his Algerian compatriots during his military service.

While these elements are familiar to many, Matoub's originality lies in his reactions. He offers the reader the portrait of an early hero, resisting school and the army, often to his detriment, since he failed in school and was disciplined many times while in the army. Although he is rooted in Kabyle society and experience, Matoub is a free spirit and possesses a sense of entitlement that distinguishes him from his Kabyle compatriots. Matoub will cultivate both aspects of his personality with much difficulty.

A Kabyle Childhood

Matoub's autobiography is a sort of Kabyle bildungsroman, whereby a mischievous little boy grows up in a small village in the mountains, happy and carefree, until he experiences violence, injustice, and oppression. He discovers the condition of being alienated, to which he responds with determination and all the strength of his character.

Early on, Matoub began skipping school. Sitting still for hours in a closed room felt like "slavery" to him.[48] However, he was fond of the Pères Blancs (White Fathers), French Catholic missionaries who organized and operated schools with a secular curriculum in Kabylia. Matoub recalls that it was these teachers who spoke to him about Berber history, especially the Berber king Jugurtha. These missionaries spoke Kabyle and were close to the population; some of them also helped the revolutionary cause and members of the resistance during the Algerian War.[49]

Matoub also recalls the brutal repression of the rebellion in Kabylia by the Algerian army just after independence. He was only eight years old at the time, but he was deeply affected by the army's unexpected violence toward the population. Matoub also explains his relationship to the Arabic language. Because Arabic was declared the only official language in Algeria and his Berber mother language was forbidden, Matoub rejected everything Arabic, including this part of his formal education: "each missed

[Arabic] course was an act of resistance, a piece of freedom earned."[50] Since Berber was forbidden, Matoub chose to use French, a language that for him had fewer traumatic associations than Arabic.

Conscription is a familiar experience for most male Kabyles; it is often the reason for their first trip out of the Berber village. For Matoub, the experience felt like a painful uprooting. He spoke no Arabic, while his fellow soldiers in Oran spoke no Kabyle. He felt like he was in a foreign country and was constantly humiliated because of his Kabyle origin: he was called "Zouaoua" and other slurs.[51] Matoub explains how, during his two years in the Algerian army, he came to hate the military because of his terrible personal experience and the corruption he witnessed and for the political power it buttressed.

Matoub's legend starts with his resistance against school, which he left without a degree, and against the army, where he kept claiming he was not Arab—a declaration for which he was constantly punished. His legend also starts with the way he channeled his anger and his feeling of exclusion through music. In *Rebelle*, Matoub recounts how, at age nine, he made a crude guitar out of an oil canister and fishing line and started to play. Matoub also started writing poetry in his teens. His experience in the military fueled his poetic inspiration, and he wrote about friendship and nature.

Matoub: The Rascal and the Kabyle Dandy

After his return from the military, Matoub sang at small events at home with some success. But in 1978 he tried his luck in France, where he met the renowned Kabyle singer Idir, who offered to sing with him at the Mutualité in Paris. Two years later, in 1980, Matoub gave his first concert to a maximum-capacity audience at the Olympia in Paris. His appearance was memorable: in solidarity with Kabylia, which was engulfed in the Berber Spring uprising, Matoub appeared on stage in a military uniform, for as he explained, Kabylia was at war. Matoub's career and his tumultuous relationship with his public were launched.

Matoub introduced a new kind of public persona for Kabylia's cultural celebrities. He was blunt and provocative, and many found him offensive. Unlike any other Kabyle public figure before him, Matoub was a sort of dandy. He paid much attention to his appearance, wearing nice clothes, driving expensive cars, and leading what many saw as a dissolute life. Eccentric, Matoub would wear a trapper hat or a Stetson with cowboy boots, had tattoos all over his body, and would often change his hairstyle. His propensity for alcohol and brawls was as damaging to his reputation as his tawdriness and eccentricities. In a word, his persona was difficult to reconcile

with deep-seated Kabyle principles based on self-effacement, politeness, and good manners.

A braggart to the elders and too tacky for the bourgeois, despite his early political message, Matoub was first supported mostly by the Kabyle youth, who liked him for his defiance, his apparent simplicity, and his closeness to the common people. This last aspect was strongly emphasized after his assassination. Articles described Matoub as a generous person and recounted testimonies of his impulse to help others, to right wrongs when he could, and to bring pleasure to people's lives, as in a story told about a simple-minded man from his village whom Matoub would invite home to wash, eat, and chat with. Matoub was even reported to have given him the keys to his car, a prized Mercedes, inviting him to take a ride.[52] Within the framework of a case study on Lounès Matoub, Farida Ziane conducted interviews in 2004 with twenty people from Tizi Ouzou, Algiers, and from Taourirt Moussa, Matoub's village. She reports several persons talking about Matoub's proximity to people. One of them said:

> C'était quelqu'un qui partageait le café avec tout le monde. A la demande d'une personne, il peut chanter dans la rue. Il aidait les pauvres de la rue. Moi personnellement, je l'ai rencontré à plusieurs reprises dans des cafés, parlant et discutant avec tout le monde. Je l'ai même rencontré saoul, sur une plage où il y avait un groupe jeunes avec une guitare, mal accordée, il s'est joint à eux. Il a chanté et toute la plage s'est assemblée autour de lui.[53]
>
> (He was someone who had coffee with everybody. If someone asked, he would sing in the street. He helped poor people in the street. I personally saw him more than once at cafés, talking and chatting with everybody. I even saw him drunk at the beach with a group of young people with an out-of-tune guitar. He joined them. He sang and the whole beach gathered around him.)

Seducing the Kabyle Public, Flirting with Death

To understand Matoub's effect in Algeria, one has to consider his polarizing yet symbiotic relationship with his public. Given his extravagant persona and the seriousness of the political topics he addressed, Matoub had to fight hard to gain the trust of his Kabyle compatriots, who for reasons due to their history (especially their history of being betrayed) were proud and reserved in the expression of their suffering, and they distrusted and disregarded those who made a public display of their lives and problems.

Public figures, whether political or social, are also suspect. Therefore, when Matoub was not disapproved of and condemned, he had to demonstrate his sincerity, which he often did by putting his life in danger. The closer he was to danger, the closer he came to his Kabyle compatriots.

When Matoub started singing in the 1970s, people discovered him and were impressed with his straightforwardness. Ziane reports one of her interviewees saying:

> Dans les années 70, dans le feu de l'action d'Imazighen Imula, Idir, Meksa et Menad, voila qu'un chanteur, qu'on connaît de nulle part, vient et déboule comme un éléphant dans un magasin de porcelaine et qui casse tout sur son passage. Quelqu'un de neuf qui vient nous dire: faites attention la réalité est là. C'est Abane Ramdane. En fait tout ce qui se disait depuis 62 jusqu'à son arrivée: tous les livres qu'on lisait en cachette, qu'on se passait sous le manteau, tous les symboles graphiques de Tifinagh qu'on apprenait, etc. Lui, il vient, d'un coup, dire levons le voile: voilà ce que nous sommes et ce que nous devons faire.[54]
>
> (In the 1970s, at the core of the action of Imazighen Imula, Idir, Meksa, and Menad, a singer came out of nowhere like a bull in a china shop and broke everything in his path. Someone new who told us: pay attention, reality is here. It's Abane Ramdane. In fact, all that was being said since 1962, all the books read in secret, traded illicitly, all the graphic symbols of Tifinagh we learned, etc., all of a sudden, he came out to say: let's bring it all out in the open. This is who we are and this is what we should do.)

However, while people were impressed with Matoub's lyrics, they were skeptical about his character. Ziane quotes one person saying that although everyone listened to Matoub's music, which was prohibited from airing on the radio and television,[55] people did not like the person:

> Tout le monde disait: Matoub, le rebelle qui dénonçait les pouvoirs publics n'était pas emprisonné. Donc les gens l'ont accusé de travailler avec le service de sécurité.[56]
>
> (Everyone was saying that Matoub, the rebel who denounced the authorities, was not imprisoned. Therefore, people accused him of working with the security services.)

In his autobiography, Matoub recounts how he suffered during this period when rumors spread that he was complicit with the Algerian regime.

Matoub claims this was part of a government campaign to discredit him.[57] He became suspect to many Kabyles, who wondered how he was able to act freely while other major Kabyle figures were arrested. Popular singer Aït Menguellet was arrested in 1985, despite his singing songs much less militant, vindictive, and caustic than Matoub's. This was a sore point in Matoub's life. He writes,

> La manœuvre était simple: j'avais trop d'impact, une influence trop importante, il fallait donc me casser. On a failli y parvenir. Cette période de ma vie m'a laissé une cicatrice indélébile. Le gouvernement avait décidé de me couper de mon public. J'ai failli devenir fou, j'en voulais à tout le monde. . . . A plusieurs reprises, je me souviens d'avoir forcé des barrages. Je voulais qu'on m'arrête. Je voulais que les gens qui m'avaient jusqu'alors soutenu reconnaissent l'invraisemblance de la situation. D'autres, des amis, subissaient sans relâche les harcèlements de la police. Moi, rien.[58]
>
> (The move was simple: I was too influential and prominent; they had to break me. They almost succeeded. That time of my life left an indelible scar. The government had decided to cut me off from my audience. I almost went mad and the whole world seemed to be against me. . . . More than once, I remember forcing my way through a roadblock. I wanted to be arrested. I wanted the people who had supported me until then to recognize how unrealistic the situation was. Others, friends, were relentlessly harassed by the police. To me, nothing happened.)

Clearly, Matoub's connection to his public was complicated and seemed at times like a relationship based on an unhealthy dependency. Matoub confessed to having almost gone mad when the government wanted to "separate" him from his public. To undermine this plan, Matoub tried his best to get imprisoned, putting his life in danger in order to prove his good faith to his public.[59] It took several years before Kabyles acknowledged his sacrifices and reciprocated. The reciprocity was initiated by the attack that targeted him in 1988, which marks the turning point in his life. He declares,

> Je comptais sur une "réhabilitation" chez moi: il a fallu que j'attende 1988 et les cinq balles d'octobre pour que la vérité se fasse jour en Algérie et en France. . . . C'est malheureusement à ce prix que j'ai regagné leur confiance.[60]
>
> (I was expecting a "rehabilitation" back home: I had to wait until 1988 and the five bullets of October for the truth to come to light in Algeria

and in France. . . . Unfortunately, it was the price I had to pay to regain their trust.)

On October 9, 1988, Matoub and two students were handing out flyers that called for supporting the marchers in Algiers. A car from the *gendarmerie* followed them, and when Matoub stopped his car, the *gendarmes* handcuffed the two students and shot Matoub in the body several times.[61] Interestingly, Matoub calls this event "rehabilitation," as if the mere idea that he was distrusted by his people had created an intolerable feeling of separation that the *gendarmes'* bullets put an end to. The separation ordeal was over, and although other painful ordeals were in store for him, Matoub would rather choose any pain and suffering, including death, over the loss of the trust of his public he had worked so hard to win over.

While in the hospital, Matoub received thousands of supportive visitors daily, which showed the extent of his popularity.[62] After his release from the hospital in France, he gave a concert in Tizi Ouzou. Matoub declares,

> Je revivais . . . Ce jour-là j'ai su que les cinq balles de Michelet étaient définitivement vaincues. Elles n'étaient que cinq tandis que des milliers de cœurs battaient en face de moi.[63]
>
> (I was reborn . . . That day, I knew that Michelet's five bullets had been vanquished for good. Only five bullets while thousands of hearts were beating in front of me.)

The singer moved across the stage on crutches to sing to a packed stadium in Tizi Ouzou.

On the cover of his 1989 album *L'ironie du sort*, which revisits the 1988 events and the shooting, Matoub is shown in his hospital bed; another photo shows him barely standing up, holding on to his crutches. On stage and in his album, he shared his physical and emotional suffering with his public, making his suffering theirs, making it Kabylia's, and the public heard him. Through his sufferings that became collective, Matoub earned his place in the hearts of his public. Ziane reports people saying, "c'est à partir de cette date que nous avons découvert le vrai Matoub" (it was from that date that we discovered the real Matoub), "les événements de 1988 ont mis un terme à toutes les critiques" (the 1988 events put an end to all criticism), and "c'est à partir de là que toute la Kabylie a été derrière lui" (it was from that point on that all of Kabylia was behind him).[64]

The last major episode in Matoub's life before his assassination took place on September 25, 1994. He recounts having a drink in a bar near Tizi Ouzou when he was kidnapped by a GIA (Armed Islamic Group) commando

unit. A few days later, in a declaration, the FIS (Salvation Islamic Front) took credit for his abduction and declared Matoub to be an "enemy of God." This was a period when violence was raging in Algeria, with terrorist acts intensifying with each passing day. During Matoub's captivity, Raï singer Cheb Hasni was assassinated in Oran. Up to that time, the FIS had never released any of its hostages alive, and Matoub, with his record of inflammatory songs against the regime and religious fundamentalism, did not stand a chance, or so it seemed. On September 28, 1994, the front page of *Le Monde* read, "After the abduction of singer Lounès Matoub, the radical branch of the Berber movement threatens Algeria with a 'total war.'"[65] The MCB (Movement for Berber Culture) had given the Islamist groups an ultimatum, and threats of retaliation against the families of the Islamists were made. In Kabylia, self-defense units were formed to defend villages against the incursions of Islamic groups. After Matoub's abduction, some militants threatened to put this militia into action. Popular emotions ran very high in Kabylia. A hundred thousand people marched, demanding his release, chanting "Matoub ou le fusil" (Matoub or the gun). Villagers braved the danger of the maquis and organized search parties to find him. To everybody's stupefaction, after two weeks in the hands of the GIA, Matoub was released alive.[66] The event was so extraordinary that some skeptics suggested that Matoub staged his own abduction, but for many his release was the first victory against terrorism and religious fundamentalism in Algeria. The GIA had retreated, and Matoub's release gave hope to people by showing that terrorism could be stopped.

His abduction deeply shook Matoub, but so did the mobilization of Kabylia for his release. Matoub knew what his struggles and Kabylia meant to him, but after his liberation, he also realized what he represented to the people of Kabylia, because the mobilization for his release was extraordinary. This moment is significant in Algeria's recent history and reflects the completion of an unprecedented union between a living symbolic figure and Kabylia. In January 1995, a few months after his release, Matoub sang at the Zenith in Paris in front of an audience of seven thousand. In the same year, he published his autobiography, wherein besides setting the record straight and answering questions about his political positions, Matoub expresses his gratitude to the people who believed in him. His feeling of indebtedness strengthened his bond with the Kabyle people. He promises to continue the fight and declares:

> Aujourd'hui je me sens des responsabilités particulières envers eux. C'est à eux que je dois ma vie, mon nom, ma popularité. Je n'ai pas le

droit de les décevoir, de les tromper. Mes chansons, ma musique, mon combat seront encore plus forts. Je les leur offre. Ils sont aujourd'hui ma raison de vivre. Ma richesse.[67]

(Today, I feel I need to face up to my responsibilities toward them. I owe them my life, my name, my popularity. I cannot disappoint or deceive them. My songs, my music, my struggle will gain in strength. This is what I offer to them. They are my reason for living. My wealth.)

All his life Matoub flirted with death. Indeed, many of his songs concern his own death, the time he will no longer be here; for example, he sang, "Assagi ligh azekka wissen" (today I am here, who knows what will happen tomorrow). After he was released by his abductors, Matoub appeared on several television shows in France, where he declared that he preferred to die for his ideas than to pass away comfortably in his bed of old age. Matoub was a rebel—the comedian Fellag called him "le James Dean des montagnes"[68] (the James Dean of the mountains)—and he knew that a rebel cannot live long unless he settles down, an option that Matoub rejected. Through his death, which he knew was coming in one form or another, Matoub ensured that his people would continue the struggle, for his murder is like a blood debt. The blood he shed represents a pledge between him and his people. Matoub was assassinated in their midst; some construed his murder in the heart of Kabylia as a violation of intimacy, a challenge to be taken up. Matoub sang about the mountains of Kabylia: "Idurar id lâmr-iw" (the mountains are my life), and these are the mountains for which he died: "Xellesagh adrar s idamen-iw" (I watered the mountain with my blood). And so, from beyond the grave, Matoub prevents Kabyles from forgetting him or what he died for. In his song "Assagi ligh azekka wissen" (today I am here, who knows about tomorrow), he sings,

Cfut di targa ma ghligh	Remember if I fall in a ditch
D anza w awen d i siwlen	My ghost will call on you

Matoub's relationship with the Kabyles was clearly bound up with the notion of sacrifice, which is so familiar to the Kabyle people that it becomes a language. It is through sacrifice that Matoub showed his love; it is also through a death drive (self-destruction) that he existed. Indeed, Matoub always flirted with death, as if in a constant duel that he knew he would eventually lose. In fact, this translates into a readiness to sacrifice himself for his ideals, to offer himself on the altar of the struggle for his culture. Eventually, Matoub's death corresponds to this sense of sacrifice, which could be rewarded only with martyrdom.

On June 25, 1998, while he was driving home to his village from Tizi Ouzou, Matoub's car was intercepted by several individuals, who riddled him with bullets. His wife, who was with him in the car, declared that he died with a gun in his hands.[69] On June 30 the GIA took credit for his assassination, but several aspects of the murder remain unclear; to this day, no trial concerning his murder has yet taken place. As news of Matoub's death spread, many stores in Tizi Ouzou closed and hundreds of youths gathered at the hospital morgue. Later they went on a rampage and destroyed several public buildings in the downtown area. Riots continued for several days, leaving three dead and many injured.[70] After Matoub's funeral ceremony, which drew throngs of people of all ages and was the site of a crisis of hysteria, people marched in Tizi Ouzou chanting, "Imazighen" and "pouvoir assassin." The same day, in the Place de la République in Paris, a similar gathering was held to commemorate the singer's life. People held signs saying "We are all Matoubs" or "Matoub, your people are now orphans." French president Jacques Chirac spoke of a "lâche assassinat" (a cowardly assassination) and declared that he heard the news "avec consternation, avec une grande tristesse" (with consternation and great sorrow), while French prime minister Lionel Jospin declared that the singer was the "victime de la barbarie, paie aujourd'hui de sa vie la force de ses convictions" (victim of barbarity; [he] pays today with his life for the strength of his convictions).[71] In Algeria, where media coverage of Matoub's music and performances had been forbidden, the Algerian state television broadcast actually announced his assassination toward the end of the daily news bulletin.

Martyrdom and Beyond

While Matoub alive was divisive, Matoub dead brought an end to all suspicion about his character, activities, and motivations. While adored by his public during his life, in death he was sanctified by the whole region and beyond. And his songs continue to resonate in Algeria, Morocco, and elsewhere where Amazigh activism continues its course. In the end, Matoub was never more alive than after his death. And he continues to live. Suffice it to read the titles of some articles that appeared between 2005 and 2010, about a decade after his death, in *La Dépêche de Kabylie*, a Kabyle newspaper: "Matoub, huit ans d'immortalité" (Matoub, eight years of immortality); "Matoub, une école, un avenir" (Matoub, a school of thought, a future); "Matoub comment ne pas l'aimer" (Matoub, how not to love him); "Matoub ou le Che Guevara kabyle, l'immortel" (Matoub, or the Kabyle Che Guevara, the immortal); "Matoub est notre père spirituel" (Matoub is our spiritual father); "Matoub Lounès ou le symbole éternel" (Matoub, or the

eternal symbol); "Matoub Lounès toujours prophète en son pays" (Matoub Lounès, always a prophet in his country); "Matoub revient cette semaine" (Matoub comes back this week); "Matoub est toujours là" (Matoub is still here); "Matoub Lounès, l'immortel . . ." (Matoub Lounès, the immortal); "Tous pour Matoub" (All for Matoub); and "Matoub: 'Je suis encore là!'" (Matoub: I am still here). Matoub was called, in turns, the Kabyle Martin Luther King Jr., the Kabyle Nelson Mandela, and the Kabyle Che Guevara. People recalled that after hearing the news of his assassination, they felt humiliated, insulted, and guilty, and their grief was so strong that they stopped eating and drinking.[72] There is even mention of a new religion associated with the singer: Matoubisme. Some youths say that God is great and Matoub is his prophet.[73] These reactions show a popular canonization of the singer whose portrait appears everywhere in Kabylia, including stores, cars, homes, village entrances, and buses. Matoub has certainly attained martyrdom, if not sainthood.

Along the same lines, most books published after Matoub's death do not show any interest in going beyond paying homage to the assassinated poet. Sociologist Smaïl Grim's *Matoub l'assoiffé d'azur*, published in Algiers in 2009, is a vibrant homage to the *maquisard* of Algerian culture. The author, smitten by Matoub's voice and poetry, places the poet among such greats as Baudelaire, Lorca, Sénac, Djaout, Hugo, El Hasnaoui, and others. The same is true of *Lounès Matoub Le barde flingué*, published in Paris in 2000 and written by Abderrahmane Lounès, who from the start proclaims both his admiration for the "master" and the objectivity of his text. The same deference and adulation are perceptible with filmmaker Mokrane Hammar, who made a short film on Matoub, wherein the figure of Matoub does not appear. The filmmaker explains this absence by saying he could not be responsible for choosing the actor who would portray Matoub, for Matoub cannot be represented.[74] Between these unequivocal eulogies and expressions of veneration and the few insipid articles written about Matoub by unconcerned authors who, from a distance, do not realize or understand the extent of Kabylia's loss, there appears to be much room in the future for further exploration of Matoub's phenomenon.

Matoub's death was also the opportunity to listen again, quietly, to his poems and voice and realize the extent of their significance and beauty. Character and persona aside, Matoub would never have attracted any meaningful attention without his poetry and his direct, innuendo-free style, which is accessible to everyone. Matoub used the language of everyday life in his poetry, though his poems are nonetheless "poetic," not only because poetic images, sayings, proverbs, and aphorisms are used in everyday conversation

but also because Matoub created unique and remarkable poetic images that have left their mark on the Kabyle language. Consider the following examples: "agujil bw awal" (orphan of the word), "an zeddagh targit" (we inhabit dreams), "afus n lbatel itt walqem" (the hand of injustice propagates from cuttings), "a tettghar tala usirem" (the well of hope is drying), and "D asemmam useqqi n tegrawla" (revolution is a bitter broth).

Unlike his fellow Kabyle poet Aït Menguellet, whose every song is subject to endless discussion, speculation, and supposition about its meaning and purpose, Matoub's songs do not need such dissection; they are straightforward and poetic and are appreciated for being just that. Matoub sang first and foremost about his own experiences: his two-year stint in the army, his disappointments and joys in love, smoking hashish, treacherous and loyal friendship, and the passing of his father. Matoub did not hide any aspect of his life, despite the risk of censure or mockery; he even talked about his own sterility, a taboo subject in Kabyle society. Along with these personal experiences and confessions, Matoub brought revolution and, especially when faced with the government's denial of Berber identity, *tamohqranit*, or humiliation. He also brought to the surface recent Kabyle history from independence onward, a history that still resonates in the Berber community. Moreover, he sang about current events, such as the Berber Spring and the police assault on the University of Tizi Ouzou in 1980: "Ihzen lwad Âisi" (Mourning El Oued Aïssi).

Eventually, Matoub came to embody the notion of honor and challenge that Bourdieu discusses in his *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*.[75] Matoub's integrity and obstinate determination vis-à-vis the principles he defended are found in his song "An arrez wala n knu" (We would rather break than kneel), a phrase used in most Kabyle marches to refer to the people's commitment to basic claims such as justice, democracy, and linguistic rights:

An-nerrez wala n knu	. . . Better break than bend
Awal fi smaren rekku	The word on which they spilled garbage
S tirrugza a d-yehyu	Will be restored with honor
Anta ttejra ur nesâa azar	Is there a tree without roots?

Matoub refused to compromise when he felt that fundamental rights had been trampled by the government. This position goes hand in hand with an acute sense of egalitarianism and justice, illustrated in songs where Matoub takes the side of the oppressed: the masses, the poor, the mountain-dwellers, the peasants, and the illiterate. They are his people, and he strived to become their voice. Smaïl Grim declares the music and persona of Matoub

Lounès to be the battle flag of the poor and persecuted against the *hogra* in all of Algeria.[76] In his songs, Matoub denounces *tamohqranit*, which in Kabyle means "disdain" or "contempt"—contempt for the Kabyles, for the poor and disenfranchised. In Algerian Arabic, the equivalent of *tamohqranit* is *hogra*, which refers to a feeling of exclusion and lack of justice. Both words are used in Kabyle, but it is interesting to note that the Kabyle term also relates to the contempt for a person's pride and honor. Matoub's intransigence regarding his defense of Berber culture endeared him to the Kabyles. His strong, vibrant, guttural voice, which was at the same time smooth, warm, and melancholic, mesmerized his listeners. His sacrifices and proofs of honesty eventually created a bond and a feeling of complicity between him and his public, which finally admitted to recognizing itself in him. By mirroring his public's predicaments, its history, and its pain, Matoub finally convinced his Kabyle compatriots to let him be their hero, their iconic Kabyle rebel.

During his lifetime, people often worried about and sometimes even feared Matoub's rebellious temperament, for he was uncontrollable, unpredictable, untamable, and inevitably free. Matoub lived his life as a rebel and died as one. He combined his strong, independent, and eccentric personality with the collective voice of his people. In this sense, Matoub reached deep into Berber history and culture, resonating with the mythic King Jugurtha of antiquity while being modern in many ways. Berber writer Jean Amrouche attempted to capture what he called "the African spirit" with his own rendering of Jugurtha:

> On reconnait d'abord Jugurtha à la chaleur, à la violence de son tempérament. Il embrasse l'idée avec passion; il lui est difficile de maintenir en lui le calme, la sérénité, l'indifférence, où la raison cartésienne échafaude ses constructions. Il ne connaît la pensée que militante et armée pour ou contre quelqu'un. . . . Il est poète; il lui faut l'image, le symbole, le mythe. . . . Son climat de prédilection, celui où il se sent vraiment vivant, c'est le climat de la passion et de la lutte. . . . Un des traits majeurs du caractère de Jugurtha est sa passion de l'indépendance, qui s'allie à un très vif sentiment de la dignité personnelle. . . . Si l'on ménage son amour-propre et le sentiment de sa dignité, on peut s'en faire un ami et obtenir de lui beaucoup et jusqu'au dévouement le plus passionné, car il est généreux, jusqu'au faste, comme seuls savent être généreux les princes et les pauvres gens. . . . En d'autres termes, Jugurtha croit très profondément à l'unité de la condition humaine, et que les hommes sont égaux en dignité ou indignité. . . . Il s'ensuit

une propension naturelle à l'indiscipline, au refus de reconnaître toute discipline imposée du dehors. . . . Le génie africain est par excellence hérétique. . . . Dès que l'hérésie triomphe en orthodoxie, dès qu'elle ne nourrit plus la révolte, Jugurtha trouve en son génie la source et dans les circonstances l'occasion d'une nouvelle hérésie.[77]

(You first recognize Jugurtha by the heat, the violence of his character. He embraces ideas with passion; it is hard for him to stay calm, serene, and indifferent enough for the Cartesian reason to structure its arguments. The only thought he knows is militant and armed for or against someone. . . . He is a poet; he needs images, symbols, and myths. . . . His favorite climate, the one where he truly feels alive, is the climate of passion and struggle. . . . One of the main traits of Jugurtha is his passion for independence, combined with an acute sense of personal dignity. . . . If you encourage his self-esteem and his sense of dignity, you can become his friend and gain much from him, even the most passionate devotion, because he is generous, with a pomp that only the prince and the poor can muster. . . . In other words, Jugurtha deeply believes in the unity of the human condition and that men are equal in dignity or indignity. . . . A natural tendency towards indiscipline, the refusal to accept any discipline imposed from outside, ensues. . . . The African genius is archetypically heretic. . . . As soon as heresy triumphs and becomes orthodoxy, as soon as it no longer feeds a revolt, Jugurtha distills from his own genius the source and the conditions necessary for a new heresy.)

Amrouche's portrayal of Jugurtha corresponds in many ways to the portrayal of Matoub that was elaborated during his lifetime and after. Both men were eccentric, impertinent, unpredictable, and hot-tempered, but passion is what best describes the driving force behind the King and the Rebel.

Djaout and Matoub: Secularism and Algerian History

"I am neither Arab nor do I have to be a Muslim."
Matoub

Matoub sang not only about the Kabyle Mountains and the Berber resistance but also about everyday life, including sensitive topics such as gender relations and male sterility. His poetry has been compared to that of Lorca, Darwish, Baudelaire, and Anna Akhmatova.[78] Matoub lived in his time and spoke about his moment, which was in part overshadowed by the Algerian

Civil War. And in speaking about his moment, Matoub severely criticized three groups: the "*itcumar*" (the bearded ones, i.e., the Muslim fundamentalists), "*el houkouma*" (the authorities, i.e., the one-party system and its subordinates), and "*lqbayel n service*" (duplicitous Kabyles). Matoub sang about his lack of sympathy for these three groups, his concern for the way the Algerian government ran the country, and his fear that in the future Algeria might be run by Islamists.

Clearly, Tahar Djaout shared some of Matoub's concerns. Besides the fact that the men were friends and were both Kabyles, were major Algerian cultural figures, and were assassinated a few years apart, they also shared a common set of political values and objectives: the defense of secularism and democracy. The song that Matoub wrote to Djaout's daughter, Kenza, after her father's assassination, is a vibrant testimony to the two men's friendship and their common battle:

A Kenza a yellli	Kenza my daughter
Sebar as ilmehna	Be strong in face of adversity
D isflan neghli	We fell as sacrificed
F Lzayer uzekka	For tomorrow's Algeria
A kenza a yelli	Kenza o my daughter
Ur ttru yara	Do not cry
Xas terka ldjessa tefsi	Though the body rots and fades away
Tikti ur tettmettat ara	The idea will never die
Xas fellagh qeshet tizi	Even if these are difficult times
I facal a d nadjew dwa	We will find a way out of exhaustion
Xas neqden achal itri	Though they switched off so many stars
Igenni ur inegger ara	The sky will never be deprived

This excerpt from the song titled "A Kenza yelli, ur ttru ara" (O my daughter Kenza, do not cry) contains two interesting statements. The first one is the inclusion of the poet in the number of stars sacrificed for the good of the country. It is clear here that Matoub imagines himself already dead and on this long list of fallen stars that used to shine in Algeria's sky. The other point is the poet's relationship to the country. Like the previous generation of Berbers who fought for Algeria's independence, Matoub still believes in *his* Algeria. He was assassinated before the release of his last album, which was announced for Algeria's Independence Day, July 5, the same day the Algerian government chose to put into effect the law that imposed the exclusive use of Arabic in Algeria, thereby officially reiterating the exclusion and denial of Matoub's language.[79] In his posthumous album, Matoub included a vitriolic song based on the score of the Algerian national anthem. This

song, which is part of a longer song, enumerates the impediments preventing Algeria from becoming a better and stronger country. These impediments include the political class' greed and corruption, the injustice they mete out, and the official lies they tell. This song directly blames those in power and suggests a simple solution: federalism.

Ulaygher nardja assirem a nsenned fssber
Amsedrar ur ihekkem xas yeghra yezwer
Afus n lbatel ittwaleqem lghella-s d ccer
I lasel ssamsen udem yeghma yejjunjer
Jeggren s ddin t-ttarabt tamurt n Lezzayer
D ughurru! D ughurru! D ughurru!
D ungif ibubben tabburt akken iwen tedra
Ma tghilem ad delqen it sarutt t saâam niya
Wi aâarden tacriht n tsekkurt ur iqennaâ ara
Ddwa-s an cerreg tamurt an nebrez tura
Amar assen ay atma at-tnaqel Lezzayer
Seg ughurru, seg ughurru, seg ughurru . . .
S lasel d ssfa n laâqel ss an nezwi Lezzayer . . .
Seg ughurru, seg ughurru, seg ughurru

(It is useless to wait and rely on patience
Though intelligent and educated, the highlanders will never lead
The hand of injustice propagates from cuttings, its harvest is disaster
They sullied the face of our ancestors, they soiled it
They repainted Algeria's face with religion and Arabic
Imposture! Imposture! Imposture!
It happened to you as in the tale of the one who was carrying the door
If you think they will release the key you are naïve
For the one who tasted the flesh of partridge will never be satiated
The solution is to divide the country and we will improve it.
So the day will come when Algeria stands up again
From imposture, from imposture, from imposture . . .
With probity and intelligence we will save Algeria . . .
From imposture, from imposture, from imposture)

These lines advocate federalism, which for Matoub is one way to strengthen Algeria, not to weaken it or, worse, to separate from it. Matoub was often accused of wanting to divide the Algerian nation; federalism was construed as a major offense to the stability and integrity of the country. Still, even in his most desperate moments, Matoub was deeply attached to Algeria.[80]

Tahar Djaout's vision of Algeria is not far from Matoub's. A few days before his assassination, Djaout gave an interview about the state of Algeria, its intellectuals, and its schools; he clearly associated Islamic terrorism with the ideology of the FLN's one-party state. He commented,

> Lorsque nous prenons la Constitution élaborée par le FLN qui stipule que l'Islam est religion de l'Etat, il est évident que les islamistes, dans leur logique, ne demandent que l'application de cet article de la Constitution.[81]
>
> (Take the constitution elaborated by the FLN, which stipulates that Islam is the state religion; it is obvious that Islamists, in their logic, ask only for the application of this article of the constitution.)

Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria, as Djaout saw the movement, is the result of the political and ideological practices of the government since independence. Although Djaout refused to use the same means as the religious fundamentalists to fight them (i.e., violence)—instead, he suggested using the full extent of the law and establishing a humanistic culture in Algeria—he also rejected dialogue with the FIS as initiated by the Algerian government. No matter how popular this party is, he argued, one does not have a dialogue with a religious political party that negates the value of humankind and democracy, just as one does not have a dialogue with Nazism or fascism.[82] Matoub expressed similar feelings when he accused the government of creating a monster that it cannot control. He sings, "tetghebbel tzehher tlafsa, xelqen-tt-id dg-es a ewqen" (the monster is getting stronger and rumbles; they have created it and now they are stuck; they don't know what to do).

Both Djaout and Matoub believed in a secular state where religion was kept separate from politics. Both condemned the oppressive intrusion of religion into everyday life and the enhanced role of religious leadership. Djaout imagined a scenario in his posthumous novel, *Le dernier été de la raison*, published in 1999, where the "Vigilant Brothers" rule the country. Boualem Yekker (in Kabyle, "*yekker*" means "standing"), a bookstore keeper, resists the oppression thanks to his books and his childhood memories, for life has become unbearable, especially for women:

> Les couples! Peut-on réellement parler de couples dans une société scindée en deux, avec une des parts effacée du regard, niée, réduite à un réceptacle, à un lieu de jouissance dans l'obscurité coupable? . . . Des hommes, se prévalant de la volonté et de la légitimité divines, décidèrent de façonner le monde à l'image de leur rêve et de leur folie.

Maints citoyens découvrirent que Dieu pouvait révéler un visage bien hideux. Le résultat est là, sous les yeux: couples forcés, attelés sous le même joug afin de perpétuer et multiplier l'espèce précieuse des croyants. Les femmes réduisent leur présence à une ombre noire sans nom et sans visage. Elles rasent les murs, humbles et soumises, s'excusant presque d'être nées. Les hommes devancent leurs femmes de deux ou trois mètres; ils jettent de temps en temps un regard en arrière pour s'assurer que leur propriété est toujours là: ils sont gênés, voire exaspérés, par cette présence à la fois indésirable et nécessaire.[83]

(Couples! Can you really talk about couples in a society divided in two with one half whose face is erased and denied, who is reduced to being a recipient, a place of pleasure in guilty obscurity? . . . Men, claiming divine legitimacy and evoking God's will, decided to model the world after their dream and folly. Many citizens discovered that God could have a very ugly face. The result is here before our eyes: forced couples, harnessed to the same yoke in order to perpetuate and multiply the precious species of the faithful. Women are present as a mere dark shadow, nameless and faceless. They hug the walls, humble and submissive, almost apologizing for being born. Men walk two or three meters in front of their wives; they look back from time to time to make sure their property is still there; they are embarrassed, even irritated by this presence, unwelcome but necessary.)

In this fable, Djaout portrays a horrendous potential reality. Women are reduced to reproductive machines and are denied any form of individuality or subjectivity, somewhat akin to the story told in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the name of divine will, life has become a daily torment. Matoub expresses similar torment and concern in his song "La soeur musulmane" (Muslim sister), where a woman defies the religious law that denies her dignity, honor, beauty, and language and so finally decides to leave her community and country:

Ma nsâa amkan deg wegdud	. . . Will we ever have a place among the people?
Nagh lebda an kennu i laâwam . . .	Or will we always bend in submission?
Imi Rebbi ighunza yi	Since God resents me
Imi Rebbi icuhen-iyi	Since God is offended by me
Yeggul ur I yeffigh laâtab . . .	That he has only suffering in store for me

Aâmdagh a k djagh ay axxam . . .	I am now leaving you, my home
Ulaygher nerdja qessam . . .	It is vain to wait for help from God.

This song is one among many that Matoub composed about religion and its dangers. Democracy, freedom, men, and women are in danger when religion dominates the public sphere and dictates national policy. Matoub believed in a secular state and declared that the separation of religion and power was essential for a healthy nation.[84] In a song called "Eras Tili" (Give him some shade), he implores his religious compatriots, who probably have lost all sense of direction, to put "the sun back in its place."[85] Women are often the first victims of repressive religious discourse, and in his last album Matoub addresses this. In "Lettre ouverte aux . . ." he bears witness to the devastation that started with the repression of women and warns against the national tragedy that would follow:

Uuuh amek ara themmled	How can someone love
Taqcict deg ur k d ban wara	A woman whom you can hardly distinguish?
Amek ara tezred	How can you see
Ayen akken lhijab yerba	What the veil covers from the eye?
Humm ur ten-ttamnet	Do not believe them!
D iaâdawen n tudert	They are enemies of life
Werâad i tt-ttfen nehraret	Turmoil is everywhere and they don't have the power
Ma tfen-tt at tenger tekfa	When they do it will be chaos and death everywhere

Obviously, Matoub especially feared the political power of religion, though his criticism was also directed at the religion itself, Islam. He boldly demystifies the sacredness of the holy text and questions its inscrutability—the Koran is considered untranslatable—and criticizes its claim to total knowledge as well as its hypnotic effect on its adherents. In a harsh and incisive song, "Allah Wakber" (God is great), Matoub condemns people's naiveté and deplores their gullibility:

Taârabt d awal n Rebbi	Arabic is the word of God
Dg es tamusni	It is the language of knowledge
Macci am tigad niden	Nothing like the other ones
Fellas ma tebbded s ifri	If you are about to fall in the abyss
Xas grireb ghli	Just let yourself fall
D Muhemmed aa k id iselken	Because Mohammed will save you

Hader ad ak d yeldi yezri	Just make sure you do not open your eyes
Qar kan Sidi	Sing along with the devout
I widen i k yezzuzunen	Those who lull you to sleep
Allah wakber Allah	God is great

In a similar manner, the conflation of the sacred text of Islam and Truth is considered from a child's perspective in Tahar Djaout's novel *Le dernier été de la raison*. The writer opposes the notion of absolute truth to imagination, fantasy, and dream. In the chapter titled "Le Texte ligoteur" (the binding Text), Djaout describes the violence the child experiences when learning the sacred Text:[86]

> L'imagination est laminée par la Vérité qui obture l'horizon, empêchant l'œil et l'esprit de vagabonder au-delà des limites assignées. L'enfant est sérieusement traqué. Désir de se calfeutrer, de résister afin que la Vérité castratrice n'avance pas, anéantissant la gaieté, l'impertinence, la fantaisie. Rêve vite désagrégé sous la baguette qui s'abat.[87]
>
> (Imagination is overlaid by Truth that blocks the horizon, stops the eye and spirit from roaming beyond fixed boundaries. The child is closely supervised. Wanting to hide, to resist in order to halt the emasculating Truth's progress, crushing cheerfulness, impertinence, and fantasy. Dream quickly shattered by the descending stick.)

The Truth of the Text obstructs the horizon. It possesses a castrating power, which sucks the life out of the body and the mind. In *L'invention du désert*, Djaout initiates this reflection, showing the danger associated with the Text's perfection and beauty, attributes that thwart all human expression:

> Le Texte qui musèle le monde par son intransigeance, sa beauté—qui ne tolère que l'acquiescement. Le Texte jaloux, tyrannique, qui n'admet aucune autre parole, aucune autre figure signifiante.[88]
>
> (The Text that muzzles the world with its intransigence and its beauty—that tolerates only acquiescence. The Text, jealous, tyrannical, that tolerates no other word, no other prominent figure.)

Both Djaout and Matoub, in their respective cultural and literary endeavors, affirmed their attachment to secularism, democracy, and justice in Algeria. This commitment also took the form of revisiting their country's history. However, and understandably so, Djaout tackles Algerian history differently from Matoub. His take is more literary and sophisticated and

incorporates the creative and imaginative dimension. Matoub's objective is less original (though his work on the language is innovative) but no less effective. Berber linguist Saïd Chemakh argues that one can reread the entire Algerian history since the war of independence just by analyzing Matoub's poetry.[89] Indeed, not only did Matoub sing about major events in the life of the country (the war of independence, the Berber Spring, the 1988 uprising in Algiers, the London Accords, etc.), but a significant portion of his repertoire is dedicated to setting the record of Algerian history straight. In one song, "Regard sur l'histoire d'un pays damné" (Glance at the history of a doomed country), Matoub revisits in detail Algerian history since independence and includes the hushed-up assassinations of major figures in the Algerian revolution, such as Abane Ramdane and Krim Belkacem, the 1963 rebellion in Kabylia, and several other significant episodes in the country's history. Matoub also tackled taboo subjects, such as the banishment of famous Kabyle poet Slimane Azem, who had been accused of siding with the French during the Algerian War.[90] In a beautiful song dedicated to the bard of exile, Matoub restores Azem's tarnished reputation. But Matoub is unforgiving and ruthless toward his Kabyle compatriots, who side with power, as with Algerian prime minister Ahmed Ouyahia, whom Matoub criticizes sharply in his "Lettre aux . . ." He declares,

Kecc tetturebbad iccwal	You were raised to make trouble
Tbedddled lasel ik s tejaâl	you who have traded your roots with bribes

On the other hand, Matoub recognized men of stature and courage when they emerged, as was the case with Mohamed Boudiaf. The latter is a historical figure of the Algerian revolution; he opposed the Algerian leadership after independence and lived in exile in Morocco from 1963 until 1992, when he was called back to reform Algeria after the cancellation of the Algerian elections. Boudiaf took his role seriously and gained popularity by addressing people in popular Arabic. He was assassinated a few months after assuming power. Matoub wrote a moving hymn in homage to him, "Hymne à Boudiaf."

In the end, Tahar Djaout and Lounès Matoub played different roles in Algeria's fin de siècle. Matoub was a committed poet-singer who privileged and cultivated an intimate relationship with his audience; this became his raison d'être. The trust of his people, his public, was most important to him. He emerged as their voice, a thunderous, loud, and deep-toned voice. Matoub also expressed a deep sense of freedom and rebellion in his actions, opinions, and in his private life to the point of being unmanageable and

uncontrollable. And it is in his nonconformist attitude and idealism that Matoub came closest to Tahar Djaout.

As for Djaout, he looked to childhood as a model, for only there, he insists, is paradise. Menouar, a character in Djaout's *Les vigiles* claims that if he had the choice between going to paradise and the opportunity of living his childhood a second time, he would opt for the latter. And childhood is inseparable from the locus where it was experienced—that is to say, the village and its surroundings. Finally, and oddly enough, besides the commitment to political and social ideals that both Matoub and Djaout share, the place or the idea that is most intimate to both is the Berber village, which might very well have produced this unique and unexpected complicity between the two men. In *L'invention du désert*, the narrator reports that he always gets sick when he travels.[91] His only relief is to imagine the river from his childhood:

> Alors tu remontes, guidé par un étrange bruit (nostalgique à faire pleurer), vers les racines de ton fleuve d'enfance, vers la source de l'arbre millénaire.[92]
>
> (So you go back, guided by a strange noise [nostalgic enough to make you cry] to the roots of your childhood's river, to the source of the millenary tree.)

The village's natural environment, its fauna and flora, has captured the attention and imagination of many Berber writers, as does the fig tree, which was particularly meaningful to Djaout, as it was to Nabile Farès and Mouloud Feraoun. For Matoub, his attachment—if not the very continuation of his body and soul—is to the Kabyle Mountains. In the end, the difference between Matoub and Djaout is that Matoub speaks from within the Berber village and Djaout from outside it. It is the difference between being *in* the village and *of* the village.

Matoub and Djaout embody two Algerian postcolonial experiences, though in many ways they complement each other. With their assassinations, the perpetrators murdered two major symbols of democracy and vibrant cultural and political life in Algeria.

5

Assia Djebar and the Mountain Language

The Return of the Repressed

GUARD. Oh, I forgot to tell you. They've changed the rules. She can speak. She can speak in her own language. Until further notice.
PRISONER. She can speak?
GUARD. Yes. Until further notice. New rules. (*Pause*)
PRISONER. Mother, you can speak. (*Pause.*) Mother, I'm speaking to you. You see? We can speak. You can speak to me in our own language. (*She is still.*) You can speak. (*Pause.*) Mother. Can you hear me? I am speaking to you in our own language. (*Pause.*) Do you hear me? (*Pause.*) It's our language. (*Pause.*) Can't you hear me? Do you hear me? (*She does not respond*). Mother? . . .
SERGEANT. (*To Guard.)* Look at this. You go out of your way to give them a helping hand and they fuck it up.

Assia Djebar is probably one of the best-known Algerian writers worldwide. Her novels have been translated into numerous languages, and her work has been the basis for countless articles, doctoral dissertations, and books. On college campuses across the United States, no course on francophone literature or postcolonial studies would be complete without a selection of her work. Indeed, there are even teaching guides available for her work, a fact that further demonstrates the significance of her impact on American literary and cultural studies. Meanwhile, in France, the same year that Djebar was admitted to the prestigious Académie Française (2005), a new readers group was formed, Le Cercle des amis d'Assia Djebar, which soon became a formal association. Based in Paris, it meets regularly to discuss Djebar's work and occasionally organizes conferences on the writer.

The popularity of Djebar's work developed from her (no less) impressive academic career, which started in 1955 with her admission as the first Algerian woman to the École normale supérieure de Sèvres. Two years later, when Djebar was only twenty-one, she published her first novel, *La soif*, followed by *Les impatients* in 1958, *Les enfants du nouveau monde* in 1962,

and *Les alouettes naïves* in 1967. She has authored in total thirteen novels, three plays, two collections of short stories, a collection of essays, a collection of poems, and two films. And Djebar is not just a writer; she also produced movies, was a history professor in Algiers, and lived in the United States, where she has taught at Louisiana State University and New York University. Djebar has won numerous prestigious prizes, such as the Prix de la critique internationale in Venice, Italy, for her film *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* in 1979; the International Literary Neustadt Prize for Literature in the United States in 1996; and the Pablo Neruda International Prize in Italy in 2005. These few biographical highlights show the global significance of Djebar's work and the extensive acknowledgment and appreciation of her work by the Western intelligentsia.

Besides Djebar's tremendous success in American academia and in Europe, what is fascinating is the near consensus around her work. Academics, scholars, historians, and journalists alike hail her work as revolutionary. Djebar is identified as the interpreter of her "sisters," that is, cloistered or veiled women, whether in Algeria, Libya, or any other Muslim or Arab country. As a self-declared Arab woman writing in the language of the former colonizer to defend her "sisters," Djebar's work and discourse converged with Western feminist readings and have validated feminist theories about third-world so-called Arab women.

Given the acclaim she received and the number of admirers she had, what sort of critic in the late 1970s (her film *La nouba des femmes* was released in 1978 and *Femmes d'Alger* was published in 1980)—or to some extent even today—would argue against a professed feminist's writing about the role of Algerian women during the Algerian War, literary research and writing that also addressed the oppression of Algerian women within a patriarchal Muslim society, even after independence?

Still, the near consensus of opinion surrounding the representation of women in Djebar's work and her feminist posture, and scholars' focus on and fascination with this issue precluded other significant issues, notably class—which is essential in Djebar's work—and the question of a linguistic and cultural minority in Algeria (the Berbers), which is of interest here.[1] Linked to the project of examining how Djebar gives voice to voiceless women in Algeria, some critics have focused on other aspects of Djebar's literary endeavor, namely that of excavating and reappropriating the buried history of subjugated people—that of the entire Algerian population, as well as that of Algerian women.

Assia Djebar is, then, undeniably more than an individual, and her work has significance and influence far beyond American university classrooms

and academic journals. Sharp criticism of Djebar's work is not necessarily personal, and is in fact necessary, for an acclaimed novel about Algeria that is vaunted in the American and European press and academia has real, meaningful implications for Algerians everywhere.

In another respect, Assia Djebar is also "Assia Djebar," a persona and a public figure, whose writing, albeit fictional for the most part, is about Algeria and, as I will explain, implicitly and, more recently, explicitly about the Algerian Berber community. It is important, then, to address Assia Djebar's reappropriation of Berber history, especially in *Vaste est la prison*, and to consider the links the writer draws out with her exploration of her relationship to Berber women and language, which I argue are both rooted in what I identify as ruptures—that is, Berber ruptures.

Discussing Djebar's more recent novels, Jane Hiddleston argues that it is Djebar's relationship to Algeria that becomes "dislocated and ultimately dissolved."[2] What interests Djebar in Berber history is the history of her loss and the origin of the voices that haunt her, which she continues exploring in later works, such as *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*. However, Hiddleston goes further, stating that later on, Djebar moves "away from the search for a voice and towards an acceptance of Algeria's loss."[3]

It is important to reconsider the Berber presence throughout Djebar's fiction, with a special emphasis on *Vaste est la prison*, Djebar's "Berber" novel, and her film, *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, an acclaimed film that was explicitly dedicated to the memory of the (Berber) women of the Chenoua region in Algeria. Both the novel and the film provide insight into Djebar's complex relationship to another language besides French and Arabic, and provide a glimpse of Djebar's uneasy, troubled position vis-à-vis the Berber dimension of Algeria. The link between the novel and the film, which both grapple with the Berber question and the representation of Berber women, is also provided by Djebar herself, since several scenes from the film are described and discussed at length in *Vaste est la prison*. In this novel, besides uncovering Algeria's Berber past, Djebar also reveals, in a poignant narrative composed in an elaborated introspective mode—her trademark writing style—her personal relationship to the Berber language and its significance throughout her life. The Berber language and history, as discussed in the previous chapters, have been dismissed and sometimes intentionally erased; thus, any attempt at recovering one or the other signals a notable endeavor that deserves our attention. Moreover, Assia Djebar's widely acclaimed work propelled her to the forefront of debates regarding the postcolonial world, "Arab" women, and the form and relevance of francophone narrative.

Algerian Berbers and Their Place

On the occasion of French president François Mitterrand's visit to Algiers on December 1, 1981, the French television company Antenne 2 broadcast a special update on Algeria that included an interview with Dr. Saïd Sadi, a major figure in the Berber cultural movement. In the interview, Sadi declared that democracy in Algeria is inseparable from the recognition of Berber culture, and that the accusation of separatism is a means to justify repression of the Berbers. Sadi called for the "nationalization of the country," which meant officially recognizing Algeria's Arabo-Berber dimension. On the set, French journalist Daniel Leconte explained that one of the demands of the Berbers was to consider Algerian Arabic and Berber the national languages, as opposed to classical Arabic (or Fusha) and French. Leconte added that, according to Berbers, the vast majority of Algerians did not understand classical Arabic. Assia Djebar was present on the production set and was invited to comment on the situation. Djebar first spoke about her own background, saying that she is from the now bilingual (Arabic and Berber) Chenoua region, and explaining that Berbers speak Berber in the mountains, but they become "Arabized" when they move to the city. She added that the Berber issue was not as important or as intensely felt in other Berber regions in Algeria, contrary to popular sentiment in Kabylia. She also responded to Leconte's comments, stating that the Berber problem was about to be resolved ("ce problème est en voie de déblocage"), that important changes were on the way, and that the Berber language was about to be taught in universities. In addition, Djebar mentioned that one radio station had been broadcasting in Berber since the independence in 1962. To Leconte, who stated that some children do not speak Arabic in Algeria, Djebar responded, "I believe you are wrong"; children are all "Arabized," she added, because of the high level of schooling in Algeria. Finally, Djebar was also asked about her thoughts concerning the public and critical reception of her 1977 film, *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*. Djebar responded that she made a film for television because women in Algeria watched TV.[4]

Djebar took an optimistic view of the situation in Algeria, which, she supposed, was evolving in the right direction, as she saw it then, while she played down and limited to one region the issues and concerns mentioned by the journalist. To the typical and uninformed French viewer, Djebar neither criticized nor defended the Algerian Berber claims, and her intervention could even be perceived as impartial and neutral. To the Algerian and probably to the North African viewer in general, her intervention resonated differently. While even today many Algerians would agree with her attempt

to minimize the Berber question in Algeria, others found her intervention lacking sensitivity and respect toward important issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in Algeria. But to the Berbers and the Kabyles in particular, the character and tone of this interview was offensive: Djebar did not mention the brutal police repression that took place only a year earlier in Algeria, and she showed no support for the Berber people's struggle or, most of all, for their right to exist as a community in Algeria.

Indeed, in Djebar's portrayal of the situation of the Berber language in Algeria, Arabization is a natural phenomenon, an organic and maybe even a necessary transition from the mountains to the city. This is a point of view that overlooks the fact that the Arabic language was promulgated via government programs, that laws were passed to generalize its use all over Algeria, and that the Berber language was suppressed in the process. As a result, Arabic was construed as an oppressive language for many Berber speakers. Moreover, Djebar demonstrated her faith and confidence in the Algerian government and its handling of the situation—several times during the interview she used the pronoun "we"—"nous décentralisons" (we are decentralizing)—and minimized the importance and the legitimacy of the claims of the Berber movement. She discounted, or at best overlooked, the fact that the Berber radio she referred to (Chaîne 2) was not a creation of the Algerian state, as one might assume from her comments, but was founded by the French during the period of French colonization. And, moreover, since Algerian independence, its transmission strength had been constantly reduced by the government.

Djebar made her comments on French TV one year after the Berber uprising, when many Berber workers, professors, and doctors were imprisoned, including the aforementioned Berber intellectual and militant Dr. Saïd Sadi. Indeed, fifty-nine well-known French intellectuals wrote a letter of protest over the repression of the Berber uprising to the Algerian president, Chadli Bendjedid, asking for the release of the detainees and expressing their concern about the allegations of conspiracy against a peaceful cultural movement.[5] Given the political situation then and the fact that most of the issues and claims raised by the movement at the time were not resolved, and are still unresolved today, Djebar's televised comments begged the question of her position vis-à-vis the Berber situation.

However, fifteen years after the Berber Spring, in 1995, Assia Djebar published *Vaste est la prison*, a novel in which she specifically addressed her Berber ancestry for the first time. The title of this novel is taken from a Berber poem set to music and performed by the Berber (Kabyle) singer and novelist Taos Amrouche. Historical Berber figures, such as Massinissa,

Jugurtha, and Tin Hinan are also invoked in the novel, and the text features a reenactment, among other historical discursive "excavations," of the discovery in the early nineteenth century of the Berber alphabet, Tifinagh. Five years after the publication of *Vaste est la prison*, upon being awarded the Prix de la paix des libraires allemands in Frankfurt, Germany, in October 2000, Assia Djebar gave an acceptance speech, in which she claimed her Berber roots—linguistic and cultural—as a feature of her discourse and her life as a writer. Further, she stated, the Berber language is at the center of her being, conveying her inner resistance:

> Je crois, en outre, que ma langue de souche, celle de tout le Maghreb, je veux dire la langue berbère, celle d'Antinéa, la reine des Touaregs où le matriarcat fut longtemps de règle, celle de Jugurtha qui a porté au plus haut l'esprit de résistance contre l'impérialisme romain, cette langue donc que je ne peux oublier, dont la scansion m'est toujours présente et que pourtant je ne parle pas, est la forme même où, malgré moi et en moi, je dis "non": comme femme, et surtout, me semble-t-il, dans mon effort durable d'écrivain. Langue, dirais-je de l'irréductibilité. . . . Bref ce "non" de résistance qui surgit en vous, . . . eh bien, c'est cette permanence du "non" intérieur que j'entends en moi, dans une forme et un son berbères, et qui m'apparait comme le socle même de ma personnalité ou de ma durée littéraire.[6]
>
> (I also believe that the language of my origins, that of the Maghreb as a whole, I mean the Berber language, that of Antinea, queen of the Tuareg who were long governed by a matriarchy, that of Jugurtha, the ultimate symbol of resistance against Roman imperialism, this language that I cannot forget, which rhythm I inhabit even though I do not speak it, is the way in which, against my own wishes, I say within myself "no": as a woman and, above all, I think, as a writer. Language of irreducibility, I would say. . . . In short, this "no" of resistance that all of a sudden appears in you . . . it is the permanent internal "no" that I hear within myself, sounding and looking Berber, that seems to be the foundation of my personality or of my literary endurance.)

For Djebar, Berber is the language of irreducibility, of resistance: it is the language in which she says no. The question here is how to read Djebar's more recent position vis-à-vis the Berber language—a valorizing and valorized language that enables resistance and power—against the declarations she made in 1981, her implicit dismissal of the Berber language and the

struggle of the Berber people. What changed over the intervening fifteen years, and if there was no discernible change, how are we to reconcile these opposed views? The answer to this question lies in Djebar's fiction as much as anywhere else.

The Road to *Vaste est la prison*

We might think of Djebar's career in three discrete stages of development. The first stage, 1957–67, concerned writing in French and what this means for an Algerian woman educated in French and influenced by a French way of life and thinking but who resolutely identifies with her native country and its struggle. This first stage was followed by a decade of silence roughly corresponding to the first decade of Algeria's independence, when the country struggled to formulate an Algerian identity and establish an economic and political system; Djebar admitted having tried during this period to become an Arabophone writer.[7]

The second stage, 1980–91, marks Djebar's return to writing in French, after having made her first feature-length movie, *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*. During this second stage, Djebar retained her initial interests and concerns, which include the individual's identity quest through writing, yet set here in the context of the Algerian War and the place—and suppressed role—of Algerian women therein. Another of Djebar's concerns during this stage was Algeria's "buried" history, the colonial record Djebar disinterred from the colonial French archives. At the end of this decade, Djebar turned her attention to the East with two novels, *Ombre sultane* and *Loin de médine*.

It was only at the age of fifty-nine, when Djebar began the third and possibly last stage of her career, that she actually addressed her Berber ancestry, starting with an especially strong effort in *Vaste est la prison* but also in *Ces voix qui m'assiègent: En marge de ma francophonie*, published in 1999, and to a lesser extent in *La femme sans sépulture*, published in 2002. In this stage Djebar also wrote one book on the Algerian Civil War, *Le blanc de l'Algérie*, published in 1996, and revisited earlier themes that were of importance to her. But she also sometimes moved in new directions, as with her novel *Les Nuits de Strasbourg*, published in 1997, which was set in France and concerned an Algerian woman and her French lover.

Djebar's first four novels all focus on young couples' relationships, an innovative theme at the time. In *Les alouettes naïves* (1967), Djebar focuses on the relationship of one couple, Rachid and Nfissa, with the Algerian War as a backdrop. Djebar continues to develop her treatment of couples

initiated in her previous novels, though now she shifts somewhat and describes physical relations, albeit from a traditional viewpoint. As has been well documented, Algerian women played an active role during the war of liberation; however, although *Les alouettes naïves* takes place during the war, women's active role is neither explored nor depicted. Marie-Blanche Tahon even argues that war, which is presented as a factor of change for women in their social and family roles and otherwise, is not only used to conceal the necessary struggle women need to engage in for their liberation, but it also presents their role therein as one of passive resistance.[8] Indeed, there is no autonomous feminine discourse in *Les alouettes naïves*; notably, the first-person narrator is a male character.

As for Berbers, our measure of Djebar's national and communal conscience, there are passing and superficial references that merely indicate an acknowledgment of their existence on the Algerian social landscape. Several of these references to Berbers have to do with the shape of a face, or a particular profile, such as Rachid's:

> Les pommettes hautes qui faisaient rétrécir les yeux sombres, le dessin du front et du nez droit, d'une pureté de race, type de visage comme on en trouve encore dans nos montagnes les plus hautes.[9]
>
> (The high cheekbones that made his dark eyes look smaller, the line of the forehead and straight nose of pure race: a type of face that could still be found in our highest mountains.)

Here we learn that the origin of Rachid's profile is found in ancient times, the likes of which might be found high up in the mountains, where a few specimens are left. In another "Berber" scene, Nfissa recalls disguising herself as a mountain woman to face the enemy: "elle était sortie d'une hutte, transformée dans une robe ample à fleurs sur fond parme, le visage entouré de la coiffe aux franges d'un orange agressif, véritable enfant berbère au regard audacieux"[10] (she came out of a hut, transformed by a full flowery dress with violet background, the face covered with a headscarf with violent orange fringes, an authentic Berber child with an audacious gaze). The headgear, its aggressive color, and the woman's audacious gaze all combine to make her a mountain woman, a Berber woman. There is one mention of the Berber language—which indicates to the careful reader that perhaps what is left of the Berbers in Algeria is not just contained in the shape of one's nose or the fringes of one's scarf. During a conversation among young men, one of them, Ramdane, asks about a term that was previously used in Arabic, saying, "comment l'appelles-tu, je parle le

berbère, non l'arabe."[11] (How do you call it, I speak Berber, not Arabic). This reference to the spoken Berber language also suggests that the conversation among the men was taking place in French, a language that was most useful during the war, since Algerians did not all speak the same language, and which was in turn associated with the failure to unite Algerians after independence. The novel ends on Algeria's Day of Independence, when gaunt men finally came down from the mountains, all marked by haunted gazes: "ces hommes au visage hâve, au regard de bêtes traquées"[12] (these men with gaunt faces and wild eyes). On the other hand, it was a triumphant moment for the combatants and the mountains that nurtured them.

La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua and Berber Women

La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua is a difficult film to summarize because, like Djebar's subsequent literary works, she brings together fiction, biography, historical narrative, documentary-like scenes, and archival images. The film combines archival footage from the Algerian War, eyewitness testimony from women who endured or participated in the war, fictional characters (Leila, Ali, and their child), and reenactments of historical episodes. The latter include women who sought refuge in caves during the French conquest and native cavalry units preparing for the 1871 insurrection against the French colonizer. The film does not follow a clear plot line, and very little, if any, action takes place. Instead, *La nouba* focuses on Leila, the protagonist, who has a young daughter, Aïcha, with Ali, her paralyzed husband. Leila, like many of Djebar's female protagonists, resembles the filmmaker—Westernized, educated, mobile, introverted, and focused on soul-searching—only this time the resemblance between the actress who plays Leila and the author, Assia Djebar, is uncanny, for it is also physical. Leila is haunted by war memories, and the film follows her every move inside and outside the house, especially when she goes to hear women talk about their memories of the war.

As the film's title suggests, *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* is Djebar's first effort, after a period of silence, to give a voice to women, in this particular case to Berber women, since Mount Chenoua is a Berber region of Algeria, even though it is now bilingual (Berber and Arabic). The gist of the film is contained in Leila's monologues and in her search for answers about herself, which she engages through a process of self-questioning and through other women's testimonies about the war of independence. After she returns from a long trip, Leila is tormented by visions—hauntings of a sort—from the past, by the war, and by questions about her own existence.

She needs to come to terms with her past and attempt to construct/reconstruct herself. To face her ghosts means to go and talk to women, to the elderly women from her tribe, to aunts and parents. Simply put, she must reconnect with the past and with her family. This personal quest, honorable and appealing in its own right, is at odds with the title, which suggests putting the women of Mount Chenoua first, giving them the floor and providing a space for them to speak.[13]

Technically, *La nouba* is an original and creative film. It is composed of fragments, superimposition, with a shuffling and slippage of voices and images, and includes narratives that are both fiction and nonfiction from several historical periods, and it is accompanied by different genres of music. While these techniques, along with the film's loose ends, suggest the fragmentation of life after the war and the difficulty of bringing the parts back together, they also indirectly reinforce the subjugation of Berber women, as will be demonstrated below.

One technical and aesthetic feature of the film is realized in those moments when we hear overlapping voices of women telling their stories to Leila. In these moments, in the few scenes where women actually speak, it is difficult to determine who is speaking—a kind of postcolonial film cooptation of the techniques of Europe's literary modernism, such as free indirect discourse. What we hear is often a series of disjointed or fragmented sentences, muffled or overlapping voices, delayed sounds, and more generally a sense of disconnection.[14] The result is that the viewer relies on the narrative voice, which is heard clearly above the cacophony, in order to make sense of all these stories, decipher them, and ultimately give them coherence. However, with careful attention to these muffled sounds and voices, to these snippets of sentences, we might develop a much more productive reading than that of the voice of narrative authority, represented here by Leila through her internal monologues—a technique that takes us back to early-twentieth-century modernist texts.

One scene, when Leila goes to the mountain to meet with a woman who tells her about a hero who died in the cave of Peak Marceau, is an especially strong example of the failure to give a voice to the voiceless.[15] This woman is unnamed, like most women in the film, because only heroines earn this privilege; Zoulikha, for example, is named, as she is the focus of the novel *La femme sans sépulture*. And so, for lack of a name, we shall call the woman Leila visits "the woman in a blue dress." The latter is obviously uncomfortable speaking Arabic, and she tells Leila, "Your sister [referring to herself] does not know Arabic, dear." Leila responds, "That's OK." A moment later, the woman in a blue dress tells Leila in Arabic, "And you don't

know Kabyle, dear . . ." to which Leila responds, "That's OK, speak to me in Arabic." This scene is enlightening, for we see here a woman who is not bilingual (Arabic-Berber) and who feels uncomfortable speaking Arabic, yet strangely the narrator persists, asking her to speak a language she does not know. One would expect a feminist filmmaker who deals with the political and thematic issue of the Algerian female voice/silence to hire a translator so that this woman could freely speak her so-called mountain language and not be restricted or potentially embarrassed in her role. Perhaps the filmmaker might otherwise view as an act of linguistic tyranny and oppression the forcing of a woman to tell family and personal stories in a language she speaks poorly and that makes her uncomfortable. Finally, for some viewers, including Berber women, this scene illustrates women's disempowerment rather than its opposite.

Indeed, what are we to make of other scenes in the film, as when Leila visits an elderly woman in her very modest house in the mountain? The woman, dressed in a traditional Berber dress and the Berber *fouta*, does not utter a word. Instead she puts Leila to sleep and caresses her hair. In any case, she definitely does not have a leading role, and neither do the other women in the scene.

In the end, the scene with the woman in a blue dress stands out for this Berber-derived feminist reading. It reveals the basic structure of the film, which is predicated on linguistic hegemony, one that has immediate political and social significance, as with the narrative voice that dominates all the other voices, not only through its function (as narrative voice) but also, and more importantly, in an institutional respect. Notably, throughout the film the narrative voice speaks in Modern Standard Arabic, a language the Algerian government has imposed and enforced since national independence through a program called Arabization. As noted earlier, the vast majority of Algerians do not understand standard Arabic and instead speak dialectal Arabic or Berber (or French).[16] The irony here is that when the film was released in 1978, it was inaccessible to many Algerians and, more specifically, to these women for whom the film was supposedly made.[17] The film was not only inaccessible to bilingual (dialectal Arabic/Berber) viewers but even less so to unilingual Berbers.

Still, the language barrier is not the only aspect that makes *La nouba* difficult for the vast majority of Algerians, as well as the typical moviegoer, to understand. The structure of the movie—the absence of plot and dialogue, the lack of action, the nonlinearity of the sequences, the combination of fiction and historical events—contributes to its opacity.[18]

As a cinematographic intervention, the film fails, because the distance

between the filmmaker and her compatriot women is underlined rather than closed. Women in *La nouba* are shown working in the fields or walking to and from chores in a documentary-like fashion but are never engaged. When some of them are addressed directly by Leila, usually because of their family ties to her and their knowledge of the war and past events, their voices are not heard directly. This distance, which is evident in other respects, such as with Leila's alienation from her past, family, and country, reminds one of an anthropologist who travels out to the field to gather information about the studied group and documents everything in a manuscript, which of course will be inaccessible to the participants. The film could be construed as an imagined manuscript (which in a sense it is) to be discussed in academic or artistic circles but definitely not in the circle of Chenoua women or anywhere in Algeria outside small elite circles.[19]

In theory, however, Djebar does know how to empower women and how to create dialogue among women. In an interview with Mildred Mortimer, Djebar declared,

> Quand je me pose des questions sur les solutions à trouver pour les femmes dans des pays comme le mien, je dis que l'essentiel, c'est qu'il y ait deux femmes, que chacune parle, et que l'une raconte ce qu'elle voit à l'autre. La solution se cherche dans des rapports de femmes. J'annonce cela dans mes textes, j'essaie de le concrétiser dans leur construction, avec leurs miroirs multiples.[20]
>
> (When I wonder about the solutions that could be brought to women in countries like mine, I say that the most important is for two women to talk to each other, to tell one another what they see. The solution can be found in this relation between women. This is what I announce in my texts. I try to make it "reality" in the way they are structured, with multiple mirrors.)

In this sweeping comment that addresses all women from countries like hers, Djebar asserts that there is a fundamental role for verbal communication—that is, for exchange—and narration in women's lives, adding that her texts illustrate this idea of communication. In *La nouba*, this idea is reiterated when Leila whispers to herself, "I love to listen. . . . Oh, how I love to listen. . . . I am not looking for anything but I am listening to the sound of broken memory." Yet Leila does not really listen to her informants. She merely goes through the motion of driving to the mountains and sitting next to them. There is no exchange between them, and no attention is

drawn to the content of the women's testimonies. And so, while women are not valorized in this film, despite the uplifting hymn to Algerian women at the end of the movie, Leila herself does not show that she has learned anything meaningful after these expeditions.

This last point is odd and contrary, as Leila's purpose in *La nouba*, like her fictional alter egos in Djebar's novels, is to gain a better understanding of herself. The film follows her on this existential quest, which includes the attempt to reconnect with the women from her tribe especially, even though this reconnection is unsatisfactory and fails. The reason for this failure might lie in the fact that the narrator is far too removed from the lives of these women and far too engrossed in her inner life and distress to pay real attention to the women she visits and to their stories, and to allow them to provide her with any relief or solace. Indeed, from the start, Leila is clearly out of place, an outsider unable to access the communal feeling shared among the other women. She declares that she feels "like a foreigner in [her] own country." Indeed, unlike the women she visits, Leila does not do any chores, so she is mobile—and is the only person in the film who is mobile, for her husband is confined to a wheelchair and the other women's movements are restricted by their duties at home or at work. Leila, in contrast, is shown driving her 4 × 4 back and forth throughout the film. On her trips, Leila wears the *burnus*, a cape worn by Algerian men that represents masculinity. Leila is thus portrayed as being different and modern, a modernity deployed through the acquisition of male characteristics (mobility, men's garments) and reminiscent of the power of the camera, held by the female filmmaker. These male attributes, like the dance Isma performs and her decision to start writing a diary in *Vaste est la prison*, all emphasize this female protagonist's alienation from the world of women and their struggle to articulate their individual voices.

Paradoxically, then, as Djebar reveals and develops Leila's sense of alienation and individual growth, which is a legitimate and compelling topic, the writer also contributes to a kind of curtailment of women's freedom of expression through the linguistic imposition of Arabic, and standard Arabic at that, and to undervaluing their life experience, paying too little attention to their respective testimonials. The linguistic complications that surface in the film raise fundamental questions related to the formation of the self, identity, communication, community, dialogue and understanding, and violence and war.[21] However, the author-filmmaker fails to address these questions. We learn from the credits at the beginning of the film that *La nouba* was produced by the Algerian state television service (ENTV), which could explain the predominance of standard Arabic in the film.[22]

However, while a movie in Berber would never have been broadcast, let alone financed by the ENTV, many, if not most, Algerian movies before *La nouba* were made in dialectal Arabic, such as Merzak Allouche's *Omar Gatlato* in 1977. So Algerian TV's notorious censorship regime does not explain Djebar's reluctance to employ dialectal Arabic and Berber in her film.

Critics have often associated Djebar's use of slippage, superimposition, and multiplication of voices, a distinctive and admirable aesthetic, with a progressive political stance or an exploration of the world of Algerian women. Réda Bensmaïa, for example, dissects Djebar's technique and lauds the intellectual effort that went into the making of the film, highlighting its avant-garde qualities and especially the aesthetic of the fragment, which was unknown in Algeria at the time but could be found in works by Alain Resnais, Chantal Ackerman, and Peter Handke.[23] Bensmaïa argues for the singularity of Djebar's film in Algerian cinema, noting, for instance, that *La nouba* creates a "topography of feminine places, the map of a continent as yet undiscovered, at the same time as inventing a new chronotope: that of feminine time(s)."[24] While the imaginative and artistic aspect of Djebar's film is not in dispute here, it is nonetheless important to frame (better) the "topography of feminine places" that Djebar articulates in *La nouba*. It is most important to recognize, however, that this topography is that of Djebar and Leila, her alter ego, who is presented throughout the movie in stark contrast, in terms of her mobility, activities, body language, clothing, nuclear family, and social and intellectual background, to the other women, whose lives, space, and time are not explored and remain unaffected, untouched. As a consequence, this topography and Djebar's effort to investigate a feminine world does indeed reflect a woman's world—hers—but does not reflect Algerian or Maghrebian women's worlds, as Bensmaïa argues when he writes, "*La nouba* is a film essentially geared to the investigation of a 'world' that was yet virtually unknown in Algeria: the world of space and time as perceived by women, the world of body and thought as experienced by Algerian women (and Maghrebian women in general) and of their relationship to others, to sociality, politics, morality, intellectual identity."[25]

Algerian (or Maghrebian) women in this film hardly exist or, at best, play the role of props. However, the idea that the film empowers women or represents them in one way or another is pervasive among critics.[26] Concerning the film's superimposition technique, Anne Donadey views it as "the transmission of [that] history and the retelling of a personal story" and describes Djebar's work as "a palimpsestic structure."[27] Donadey recognizes the complexity of such a structure and situates Djebar's project in a space

between "speaking for" and "speaking very close to": "[The multiplication of narrative voices reflects] her awareness of the difficulty of such a project in a post-colonial context in which letting the other speak also necessarily entails veiling her speech: the dialogue between women in Djebar's work inscribes itself precisely in the interstices between sisterhood and appropriation, in the shuttling between 'speaking for' and 'speaking very close to.'"[28]

However, as argued here, the film does not have the dimension of "speaking very close to" but only the "speaking for." In addition, Leila's personal history is often perceived as being intimately connected with the country's history, often representing it. Hafid Gafaïti describes Djebar's work as creating "la synthèse du 'je' autobiographique et du 'je' historique" (the synthesis between the autobiographical 'I' and the historical 'I').[29] Donadey asserts that Djebar's work on memory allows her to "bring stifled voices and asphyxiated memories back to life and into history."[30] These interpretations do not take into consideration the class position of the narrators, Leila in *La nouba* and Isma in *Vaste*. They are all bourgeois, educated, and urban, a background that should not be overlooked. Their unique experiences, along with their quests for personal answers, is not naturally conducive to engaging in a real dialogue with these women, which is all the more disturbing since these women share a family history with the narrator. So the narrators' experiences (Leila's and Isma's) cannot be collapsed with Algerian history and represent it, in spite of being part of it. To Réda Bensmaïa, who claims that "*La nouba* may be interpreted as preparation for (the labor of) essential mourning and for anamnesis, both indispensable if we are ever to be emancipated from the past," one might counter that while emancipation from the past is a legitimate endeavor to strive for, it cannot take place when the past is peopled with untold stories—that is, women's voices and Berber voices, whom *La nouba* only serves to silence further while claiming to liberate them.[31]

Finally, the "palimpsestic structure" of Djebar's work, to use Anne Donadey's phrase, is similar to Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry, where indeterminacy and ambivalence replace Frantz Fanon's dualism (colonizer versus colonized) or Edward Said's notion of Orientalism, a critique based on a dualism of power and powerlessness. Bhabha highlights the ambivalence of both discourses, which he combines to form the "colonial discourse." In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is

constructed around an *ambivalence*, in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."[32]

While the colonial relations become more dynamic, as they clearly do in Djebar's work, the notion of mimicry contains some drawbacks, such as the evacuation of the subject. Robert Young voices this concern in *White Mythologies*, when he states that mimicry at once enables power and produces a loss of agency, a kind of agency without a subject. He writes that "mimicry implies a greater loss of control for the colonizer, of inevitable processes of counter-domination produced by a miming of the very operation of domination, with the result that the identity of colonizer and colonized becomes curiously elided."[33]

Donadey also voices the same concern in the introduction to her study on Djebar and Sebbar. She worries that mimicry is interpreted as an "absolute collapse of categories such as the colonizer and colonized and used to cover up the continuing existence of colonial situations and the need to keep on pursuing decolonization."[34]

While I share the concerns of Robert Young and Anne Donadey about the effect of the loss of agency in Homi Bhabha's notion of ambivalence, I also maintain that this notion creates the space to identify a complex hybrid (textual) situation, of which Djebar's work is an example. Indeed, while it remains necessary to identify the subject of the discourse because of continuing situations of oppression and domination, these situations of oppression are no longer necessarily attributed to the rule of the former colonizer. Today new forms of oppression are practiced by governments and power structures run by the formerly colonized, which, hidden behind (liberal) protective labels, such as "former colonized subject," "woman," or "minority," perpetuate the domination of the West and the colonizer's view of the world or other forms of domination. The location of agency of the formerly colonized is crucial, but so is the location of domination after independence, as we have learned from the recent revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East.

Vaste est la prison: The Cumbersome Heritage, or a Genealogy of Rupture

> Ma fiction est cette autobiographie qui s'esquisse, alourdie par l'héritage qui m'encombre.[35]
>
> (My fiction is this attempt at autobiography, weighed down under the oppressive burden of my heritage.)[36]

The third stage of Djebar's career begins with the publication of *Vaste est la prison* in 1995, which marks the unambiguous inclusion of Berbers in Djebar's fictional work and launches the writer's reflection on her Berber ancestry and the role of the Berber language in her life. From this point on, Djebar openly mentions and even discusses the Berber language and history and her relationship to both.[37] In *Vaste est la prison*, fictional episodes, such as the reenactment of the discovery of the Berber alphabet and the story of Isma (Djebar's alter ego, whose romantic life and film project are unraveled here), are juxtaposed or sometimes woven into the historical reflection.

Vaste est la prison is divided into four sections. The first section tells the story of Isma, a modern, educated woman whose marriage is disintegrating. In the second section Djebar is at her best as she offers a narration of the discovery of the Berber alphabet, going back to 138 BC, with a discussion of Berber queen Tin Hinan, Jugurtha, and other historical figures. The third section discusses Isma's film project, Djebar's *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, while the fourth and final section is dedicated to a woman named Yasmina, who is killed by terrorists. Thus the novel deals with fiction, filmmaking, history, and biography.

Although Djebar addresses Algeria's Berber past in *Vaste est la prison*, Berbers, and Berber women in particular, find themselves buried deeper in the past and oblivion. This is mainly due to the autobiographical episodes around which the novel is developed. Indeed, Djebar's rediscovery of the Berber alphabet and history should be read as a personal endeavor that takes place within Djebar's broad reflection on her writing process and quest for identity, concerns that continue in her work today. Her fiction unfailingly leads us on a quest for subjectivity and for a voice and language with which this might be represented to thus attain the goal of her narrative: self-knowledge.

One could miss the whole point of *Vaste est la prison* if one overlooks the fact that the novel is first and foremost a commentary and meditation on autobiography and the process of writing based on major events or significant moments in the narrator's life. Among these formative episodes, there are narratives about the narrator's father taking her to her French school for the first time; her feeling of alienation from both her own culture and her peers; the confusing and differing relationships she has with three languages (French, Arabic, Berber); her mother's departure to visit her son in a French prison; her divorce and departure for Paris; and her professional careers as a university history professor, as a filmmaker and as a novelist.

These events are verifiable, though, as the author suggests, the autobiography soon turns into fiction.[38]

Yet, while reflections on cinematography and fictional characters that appear in the novel are examples of the dreamlike process with which Djebar uses autobiography because of their obvious fictional quality, other aspects of the novel, such as the metaphor of women or the Berber trope, are decidedly more complex. Djebar's novel combines fiction, autobiography, and reflections on the film she directed, as well as Algerian history. This kaleidoscopic aspect of her novel attests to the difficulty of treating the autobiographical enterprise without treating history and one's relationship to others. Thus, the novel comes to grips with a subject or object of introspection that is buried under the complexities of Algeria's determination and history, embodied here by Berbers and Berber women. In the end, the histories of the Berbers and Berber women turn out to be a backdrop upon which the self is projected.

Autobiography Foiled

Djebar reminds us that in Arab culture a woman who writes is a scandal, thereby emphasizing the subversive quality of her work.[39] Indeed, expressing subjectivity in writing is a transgression, further worsened by its objective: the narcissistic project of the comprehension of the self. This process necessitates a rupture with the world of women in order for the self to be distinguished from the group and so to articulate itself. The community of women is the foil for Djebar's narrator as she attempts to write "her self," like the negative of a photograph. The community is, however, often construed as embedded in the autobiographical work when autobiographies by women and minorities are discussed. Hédi Abdel-Jaouad refers to Djebar's fictional work as a plural autobiography, *autobiographie plurielle*, while Patricia Geesey, Mildred Mortimer, Hafid Gafaïti, and others write about a "collective autobiography."[40] The phrases "collective feminine biography" and "plurivocal autobiography" were also used to describe Djebar's grappling with autobiography, Algerian women, and history.[41] Nancy Miller credits Susan Stanford Friedman as the first critic to challenge the traditional view of the autobiographical self and claim that autobiographies written by women and minorities inextricably bound one's individual identity to a community's identity, which is an essential element to the formation and representation of an individual life story. The self is located not only in relation to a singular, chosen other but also and simultaneously to the collective experience of women as

gendered subjects in a variety of social contexts.[42] This endeavor, however, is fraught with difficulties, for the very community Djebar engages here is also needed to authorize her to write "her self"—that is, to grant her legitimacy.

Monique Gadant construes the transmission of the national past as a role Djebar imposes upon herself to redeem her break from the world of women and, we should note, from the Berber language as well.[43] Still, it is the nature of these very ruptures that must be questioned. On the other hand, Debra Kelly is one of the few critics who refuses the concept of "collective autobiography."[44] While she acknowledges the writer's interest in the individual's relationship to the community and the concern with exploring and making known the identity of the community, as well as that of the self, she contends that in the end, "despite the ways in which their writing strategies interweave between the self and other in all their manifestations, they are singular writing projects resulting in the production of a singular voice."[45] Jane Hiddleston comes to the same conclusion when she pinpoints Djebar's contradictory ideological positions, such as her hesitation between privileging feminine solidarity or community and individualist revolt, and declares that "the notion of a collective feminine identity needs to be treated with suspicion."[46] In a later work, Hiddleston argues that *Vaste est la prison* and *Loin de médine* seek to uncover women's lost voices while acknowledging the impossibility of that project.[47]

Indeed, perhaps ambiguity about the viability of this project is evident in *Vaste est la prison* from the start, as the author "confesses" to having written an autobiographical novel. Consider, then, that the narrator, who uses the personal pronoun I, is named Isma, which means "her name" in Arabic, while the author herself signs the novel with a pseudonym—that is to say, Djebar's birth name is Fatima-Zohra Imalayene. The anonymity of the signature entails a definite cut, or cutting off, from her real life. In his essay "Stendhal pseudonyme," Jean Starobinski construes pseudonymy as constituting a break from others.[48] He defines pseudonymy as an insubordinate act against society, in order for the writer to access an ideal and solitary freedom. This ideal freedom is what Assia Djebar strives for in spite of everything, and, for her, the place where this freedom operates is found in language. The author re-creates her identity, divided and then re-welded, only through language. Reflecting upon his own autobiographical work and use of pseudonymy, Khatibi declares that there is always an affinity between autobiography and a "clandestine pseudonymy" (une pseudonymie clandestine) which is an exercise of justification, of legitimacy of a divided self and the act of creating it in writing.[49]

Autobiography is, to borrow Khatibi's metaphor, "a portable laboratory which explores a dreamlike world" ("un laboratoire portatif qui explore la vie onirique"[50]). The dreamlike world that Djebar explores often resembles a nightmare. Indeed, the narcissistic traits that Isma, the protagonist, develops while desperately pursuing her image in a set of mirrors or oppositions is a quest to discover and explore her self. The origin of this quest can be traced to two decisive scenes in the narrator's past. The first one symbolizes the rupture with the world of women and occurred when the narrator was about to turn fourteen. The other—lost in the narrator's unconscious, for she was not yet two years old when it happened—is intertwined with the rupture with the Berber language.

Isma of *Vaste est la prison* should be considered alongside Djebar's other women-mirrors, such as Dalila (in *Les impatients*), Lila (in *Les enfants du nouveau monde*), and Nfissa (in *Les alouettes naïves*). Isma is forty and is recovering from a failed love affair. From the opening pages of the novel, she is concerned with issues that are associated with modern subjectivity. Her intense introspection projects her into the "modern" world—and *modern* here is set against its contrary terms, culture and tradition.[51] Clearly, Isma is not a traditional woman. Women traditionally acquire social status and familial respect through motherhood and ancestry, but Isma gets them through individual accomplishments: she is educated, has a professional career, is married (well), and has two children. Her midlife crisis entails a period of questioning, at the end of which she decides to divorce her husband. The divorce itself is a challenge to tradition, and Isma even pronounces a formula exclusively reserved for men who repudiate their wives in front of God and thereby appropriates the sacred formula to free herself from the burden of a (now) loveless marriage. Moreover, she divorces her husband—not the other way around—and this action confers a power over her own life that few women have. Obviously Isma's situation also denotes a Western conception of womanhood and of feminine freedom that has been acquired by the narrator through a Western education but also through a comfortable and bourgeois life.

Following a feminist reading, Isma is an example for modern women—or, in colloquial parlance, a role model. Established in a socially and economically enviable environment, Isma still questions her life, her emotions and feelings, her femininity, her desire. The first part of the novel is entirely concerned with the narrator's emotional state and her relationship with her new love object, a man known simply as "l'Aimé," the loved one, a name that brings together her desire and frustration.

Isma's destiny is set when her Arab father, a schoolteacher who teaches

French, takes her to school for the first time. The novel documents her conflicts with French culture and the values of her own society, and the mediations of the banal and glorious aspects of her ancestry, all of which are minutely detailed in the third part of the novel, "A Silent Desire." In this part the author brings together fiction, scenes from her film and reflections on filmmaking, and her own biography. This combination of fiction, filmmaking, and autobiography suggests a link between desire and foreignness. Sometimes these two notions are inseparable. For example, Isma feels alienated from French people but feels a strong desire for French books, which her mother also covets.

Isma the filmmaker describes the many shots of a scene where a paralyzed man in a chair looks at his wife, who is lying in bed—a scene of desire and the gaze that gives us some insight into the narrator's inner conflicts, into her unconscious. Following Lacan, desire functions here like a language, an empty medium within which the subject talks, an absence that confers presence. Appropriately, the narrator's desires are never fulfilled and instead leave her in a state of endless frustration and dissatisfaction. This lack and language, for Lacan, comprise desire. Moreover, in language there is always something that goes beyond consciousness, something that is excessive, and this is where the function of desire is situated. This point helps us to identify and understand (as a lack) the sexual desire for "l'Aimé" (the loved one who cannot be attained) or the excitement she expresses for the discovery of the Berber alphabet in the second part of the novel, which are both, as will be shown later, symptoms of this lack. This conception of desire explains a good deal of what happens in the novel, for over the course of the narration, the reader learns that the liaison from which Isma is recovering was never consummated. Actually, neither "l'Aimé" nor Isma attempted to articulate their desire for each other, to express their emotions, in words or otherwise. And so the passion that the narrator comments on only existed in her mind. Some passages depict the narrator's dependence on her feelings for this man, although instead of describing the man she misses, these passages focus on her desire for his gaze (i.e., on her lack). L'Aimé starts becoming meaningful to her during a soirée following a performance of celebrated French poet-singer Léo Ferré in Algiers. The narrator affirms that she desires his gaze, "s'éveilla en moi le désir de son regard"[52] (within me arose the desire for his gaze). Isma's desire is not a desire for l'Aimé but for his desire for her, which redounds to herself as an auto-desire.[53] Isma then meticulously describes the dance she performed that night:

> Ce soir je ne pouvais m'arrêter, je bondissais, je préférais soudain évoluer avec lenteur . . . mes hanches ou mon torse appliqués à soustraire, de celui-ci, l'excès, à atténuer les entrelacs, à transmuer le caractère oriental en des figures sobres, fidèles certes mais ni lyriques ni surabondantes. Seuls mes bras devenaient lianes, dessinaient l'arabesque, seuls mes bras nus, ce soir, évoluaient, dans la pénombre, tantôt en serpents tantôt en calligraphie.[54]
>
> (This night, then, I could not stop. I would leap and then suddenly feel like moving more slowly . . . my hips or my torso applied to stepping back from the excess of this rhythm, playing down the ways it interlaced, transforming its Oriental character into figures that were sparing, faithful of course, but neither lyrical nor overabundant. Tonight my arms alone became lianas, drawing arabesques, in the half-light only my bare arms moving now like serpents and now like calligraphy.)[55]

This sensual and captivating description reaches a crescendo of exhilaration, although, significantly, the dancer describes herself and compares her own movements to Arabic calligraphy. This self-description attests to her acute self-awareness and her alienation. The necessary outside look is provided by all kinds of mirrors or people that the narrator pursues everywhere, whether l'Aimé, her husband, or even her daughter, who makes her laugh and therefore allows her to hear her own laughter.

The narrator's self-contemplation (when she laughs, dances, and, above all, suffers) is related to a desire to become an object to herself. Through this process of objectification, she finally owns herself; that is, she controls her own body, her own story. The violent depiction of her passion is so narcissistic that it almost becomes a desire not for the man but for passion itself. This reflexivity appears, for example, when the narrator recounts a sleepless night:

> Je me rendormais, m'apitoyant sur moi-même, sur ma déambulation continuelle dans la ville, sur ma désespérance. . . . Je me croyais, peu à peu rendormie, devenir la fillette de moi-même.[56]
>
> (And I would go back to sleep feeling sorry for myself, in my constant walking through the city, in my despair. . . . As I gradually fell back asleep, I thought that I was becoming my own little girl!)[57]

The wish to give birth to oneself expresses the ultimate degree of this reflexive movement—that is, to create oneself, to be the creator and the object

of the creation. This perfect oneness would have no need for any sense of belonging, understood here as history or ancestry, this cumbersome heritage, nor any need for the Other, the authorization of other people or authority. By extension, this idea of "self-birth" would annul all the obstacles (linguistic, cultural, religious, or historical) that have precluded since birth the elaboration and thriving of the narrator's self.

One of these obstacles is the Other, who seems to intrude upon and upset the process of subject formation—though, as we know, in reality the latter cannot happen without this very Other. In the novel, the Others (that is to say, all the characters around Isma) are stifled, and none of them possess individual traits, have any psychological depth, and almost do not exist. Further, all the characters in the novel are nameless, even those who are closest to the protagonist. Instead they have functions; thus, the novel refers to "l'Aimé" (the loved one), the "spouse," the "girl," the "boy." The husband, whom the narrator describes as an alter ego at one point, "l'époux, lui qui, si longtemps m'avait paru un autre moi-même"[58] (my husband—the man who for so long had seemed my other self), is only a sketch, even during his violent reaction to Isma's confession of her sin, which again is based on a desire that she never openly expressed. She declares:

> Si j'avais eu une confidente . . . peut-être n'aurais-je raconté qu'une seule fois, pour le plaisir ou la tentation de m'entendre à haute voix dévider mon aventure intérieure, cette possession lente et à laquelle je m'étais abandonnée d'abord délicieusement puis douloureusement.[59]
>
> (Now I know that if I had a confidante . . . perhaps I would have told it just once; with one of them I would have ceded to the temptation and pleasure of hearing myself speak my inner adventure out loud—this slow possession to which I had surrendered at first with delight, but then with pain.)[60]

In this passage, the narrator reveals the reasons for her confession: she was looking for a way to "release" her story, a receptacle for her words. Isma, who has been imagining herself in love, finally wants to see herself imagining loving. The imaginary lover becomes an instrument, a pretext to tell or write: a pretext to the text. However, the blows she receives from her furious husband are not imaginary. The pain functions as an indicator of reality, of existence in opposition to daydreaming.

A year later, Isma encounters l'Aimé in Paris and "rediscovers" his gaze, as if moved by an automatic function:

> . . . moi regardée par lui et aussitôt après, allant me contempler pour me voir par ses yeux dans le miroir, tenter de surprendre le visage qu'il venait de voir, comment il le voyait, ce "moi" étranger et autre, devenant pour la première fois moi à cet instant même, précisément grâce à cette translation de la vision de l'autre. Lui, ni étranger ni en moi, mais si près, le plus près possible de moi, sans me frôler.[61]
>
> (. . . me gazed upon by him and immediately afterward going to look at myself to see me through his eyes in the mirror, trying to catch sight of the face he had just seen, as he saw it, this "me" a stranger and another, becoming me for the first time in that very instant, precisely because of this translation through the vision of the other. He, neither foreign to me nor inside me, but so close, as close as possible to me without touching me.)[62]

Once again the narrator seeks herself in her lover's gaze. She is still enthralled, then, despite her decision to leave everything behind and move to Paris to share her life with a poet, a relationship where, in contrast, she is the object of love, "un poète qui m'aimait"[63] (a poet who loved me) rather than a subject in love. One wonders why Isma did not initiate anything with l'Aimé, such as declaring her passion, given that she was so enamored with him, and given the courage and the strength she displays later in leaving her family to settle in Paris. The reason probably lies with solitary pleasures and narcissism. One person's narcissism, writes Freud, is very attractive to others who have renounced their own narcissism and are seeking an object-love.[64] L'Aimé was expected to declare his violent passion (the existence of which is never evident in any of his declarations) in vain. The description of love sentiments and related fantasies reveals the narrator's constant concern for herself and the difficulty she has with expression free of alienation.

Clearly, the narcissistic aspect of the novel reveals a lack, wrapped in a desire for self-knowledge and introspection that, as the autobiographical experiment reveals, cannot take place without challenging one's demons from the past, or the past itself. The demons the narrator needs to come to terms with are often female figures from the past, and in *Vaste est la prison*, these demons or ghosts are Berber women and Berber history. Both presences are addressed and described in a similar fashion—that is, around points of rupture.

In her project to articulate a personal voice, the narrator of the novel rubs against the grain of traditional North African culture. Merely saying "I"

and exposing one's subjectivity is in itself an abomination, since the moral code dictates the erasure of the individual within the group.[65] Only the devil says "me," only the devil starts with himself, reports Bourdieu in one ethnological study.[66] Jean Déjeux links the very emergence of the pronoun I in North African francophone literature to the use of French, notably through education. He declares that in North Africa, French is "la langue natale du 'je'" (the birthplace of the "I"), an expression he borrows from writer Mohammed Kacimi. In a religious context, French helps one to forget the gaze of God: "La langue natale du 'je' aide à sortir du champ religieux pour entrer dans le monde séculier, laïque, celui des citoyens, des hommes en tant qu'hommes."[67] (The native language of "I" helps leaving religiousness behind to enter the secular, non-religious world, that of citizens, men as men.)

Obviously, the narrator is familiar with the traditional view that holds selflessness as a major virtue; she has probably absorbed the idea, before turning against it. This element is crucial in our discussion of the gaze, since this awareness necessarily partakes in the formation of the self, linked to the gaze of the Other. To gain possession of this gaze would mean the capacity for self-creation—that is, to hold the key to one's self. It comes as no surprise that Djebar makes extensive use of the trope of the "eye" (assimilated to the "I"), especially when describing scenes from her film.

Isma is well aware of the way people perceive her, and she evolves under the disapproving or envious gaze of her compatriots. In postindependence Algeria, Isma is a woman who belongs to Algeria's upper class. She has a rich and influential husband, a fulfilling career, a chauffeur, a maid who takes care of her home, and a daughter who plays piano—clearly, the narrator's way of life is not common in Algeria, or in the West, for that matter. Isma received a French education, which was and is fraught with questions and ambiguities, while living in a privileged Algerian environment; it is not surprising that very early on Isma felt alienated from both the French and the Algerians around her. The following scene relates a crucial moment in Isma's youth, when she is thirteen, and marks the moment of rupture with the world of women:[68]

> Elle ne comprendra jamais car elle ne sera jamais de nos maisons, de nos prisons, elle sera épargnée de la claustration et, par là, de notre chaleur, de notre compagnie! Elle ne saura jamais que si le luth et la voix suraiguë de la pleureuse aveugle nous font lever et presque entrer en transes, c'est pour le deuil, le deuil masqué. "Elle danse, elle,

pour nous, c'est vrai; devant nous, en effet, mais quoi, elle dit sa joie de vivre; comme c'est étrange, d'où vient-elle, d'où sort-elle, vraiment, elle, l'étrangère!"[69]

(She has not yet understood and never will understand because she will never be part of our houses, our prisons; she will be spared the confinement and as a result our warmth also and our company! She will never know that when the lute and high-pitched voice of the blind mourner makes us get up and almost go into a trance, it is because our grief makes us mourn, our hidden grief. "She dances, and is dancing for us, that is true; before us, well but there it is, she is expressing her joy in life. How strange that is. Where does she come from, just where has she been? Really, she is not one of us!")[70]

These remarks, reported by the narrator, are also a reenactment of a scene that has profoundly affected her. Isma is dancing out of sheer happiness, which surprises the group of women, whose dancing functions to release tension, like a trance. Isma is obviously aware of the disapproving and maybe somewhat envious gaze of the women. And the dance she performs illustrates the tragic nature of her position, because she remains self-conscious while dancing. She knows that the freedom she has acquired through her education has a price: loneliness. Isma knows that she sacrifices the warmth and the sense of security that the community provides, but she has no choice but to keep on dancing a personal dance in which she can be creative: forming arabesques or calligraphy. It is at this moment that Isma is estranged from the other women, who form an indefinite but compact group—to which she opposes her personality and specificity.[71] By recalling this episode, Isma summons up a sense of foreignness insofar as women consider her a curious specimen, and Isma knows that she will never understand them ("elle ne comprendra jamais") nor, significantly, does she want to. The rejection is thus mutual.

The separation from the world of women is a theme that appears elsewhere in Djebar's fiction. In *L'amour, la fantasia*, for instance, the narrator speaks of the way that even her body has Westernized, for she could not sit cross-legged like the other women: "Dans les cérémonies les plus ordinaires, j'éprouvais du mal à m'asseoir en tailleur"[72] (At all the regular family gatherings, I had lost the knack for sitting cross-legged.)[73] The narrator adds that the purpose of sitting for her did not mean to join the intimacy of the group of women anymore, thereby emphasizing her disconnection

from the world of women: "la posture ne signifiait plus se mêler aux femmes pour partager leur chaleur, tout au plus s'accroupir, d'ailleurs malcommodément"[74] (this posture no longer indicated that I was one of all the women and shared their warmth—at the most it simply meant squatting uncomfortably).[75] This rupture naturally entails further retreat into the self and a decline of interest in others, if not rejection. Consider the following passage where the narrator's body is clearly opposed to those of the group:

> De l'agglutinement de ces formes tassées, mon corps de jeune fille, imperceptiblement se sépare. A la danse des convulsions collectives, il participe encore, mais dès le lendemain, il connaît la joie plus pure de s'élancer au milieu d'un stade ensoleillé, dans des compétions d'athlétisme ou de basket-ball.[76]
>
> (My adolescent body imperceptibly breaks away from this bunch of female forms. It still participates in the collective, spasmodic dances, but the next day it knows the purer joy of dashing out into the middle of a sunny sports ground to take part in athletic contests or games of basketball.)[77]

In Djebar's fiction, dancing has an important function inasmuch as it is a form of creative expression for her female protagonists. The earlier dance scene reveals the moment of awareness of Isma's difference. Significantly, she remembers exactly the time of this episode, "j'avais treize ans et quelques mois, pas encore quatorze" (I was thirteen and a few months, not fourteen yet), which is followed a few months later by her decision to keep a diary, implying isolation and reflection and initiating the writing process. This activity, construed as a private activity against the community, tradition, and honor, will further solidify Isma's departure from the world of women.

Reappropriation or Evacuation of Berber History?

Rewriting history has become an essential feature of the postcolonial project. Novelists, scholars, and critics assume the difficult task of offering renditions of experiences and perspectives that had been previously dismissed or even expunged by the colonial enterprise. *Vaste est la prison* is such a project, as Djebar undertakes a rewriting of Algerian history, a narrative of facts that were also expunged in so many ways from the official Algerian record. The strategies of incorporating individual experiences into the well-institutionalized and well-established discipline of history, as well as slippage techniques and the inclusion of fictional events or characters, for

example, are all creative ways of recovering dismissed history. These strategies reappropriate specific historical events, in order to produce another account of history, through bits and pieces of stories, archives, legends, and fiction. It has been a long time, writes Jeanne-Marie Clerc, since history has stopped being considered an infallible enterprise of comprehension. History has become an effort of memory to recuperate silences from the past, cuts, and different knots.[78]

The object of the act of "reappropriation" in *Vaste est la prison* is the Berber past, to which the second part of the novel, titled "L'effacement sur la pierre" (erasure on the rock), is devoted, and which here is brought about through an account of the discovery of the Berber alphabet. This section is composed of actual events, which are imaginatively reenacted, as well as fictional parts. The choice of Berber history is pertinent for this kind of endeavor, since it has been systematically distorted, deliberately ignored, written off, or exoticized. By investigating Berber history, Djebar attempts to produce an alternative reading of history presented not only by France, the former colonizer, but also by Algeria, the former colonized, both of whom have been oblivious to certain data, events, and experiences, although for different reasons.

This part is one of two sections in the novel that are not directly linked to the narrator's persona; the other section concerns a woman named Yasmina, whose story is told in two pages at the end of the novel. This part retraces the rediscovery of the lost Berber alphabet; the quest is sustained by the desire of the numerous investigators to rediscover and decipher this alphabet. The narrator shares this desire, which, as I argue later, embodies an ongoing absence. However, for Djebar, the rediscovery of the alphabet does not provide satisfaction, and the lack or absence reemerges in another form.[79] The Berber presence in the novel as a whole oscillates between presence and absence, which pervades the novel and provides it with a framework.

The title, *Vaste est la prison*, comes from a traditional Berber song:

Meqqwar lhebbs iyi nghan	Vast is the prison that chokes me
lbeq ikurdan	Fleas and bugs devour me
Ans ara-d ferregg felli	From where would my deliverance come?[80]

"Vaste est la prison" is the French translation of a traditional Berber song/poem that was transcribed by Jean Amrouche, who learned it from his mother, Fadhma. Taos Amrouche, Jean's sister, sang a variation of it, which she attributed to the famous bard Si Mohand ou-Mhand. She called it "The Prisoner." During her last performance in Paris, in 1975, Taos Amrouche

presented these songs to her audience, saying that they had been orally transmitted for millennia. "If I plead," she said during that performance, "be it that it is not only for the tradition of my ancestors but for all the oral traditions of the world which are all endangered . . . I occasionally said that I considered myself as the witness of past generations, well this time, I am fully aware that I sing not only for past and present generations but also for future generations."[81] The traditional Berber poets or bards were not individuals separated from their people—although they were not all anonymous—but represented people, because they were an integral part of their people: "Ils restent dans le corps du peuple, partant ils plongent dans son âme" (they stay within the body of the people, thus they dive in its soul).[82] Taos Amrouche sang these traditional poems/songs in order to revive them, and recording them as texts was a continuation of this project.

With Djebar's novel, one of the verses from the Berber poem has become a title and therefore points to another potential form of rescue. This singular use of the poem provides both continuity and discontinuity with the original poem. It provides continuity, because the poem is brought back to life simply through the use of one of its verses, which performs the significant function of symbolizing the novel. It also provides discontinuity, because the verse is extracted from the poem and consequently inserts a break in the chain of the "clairchantants" while shifting the signified—that is to say, the meaning of the verse. Thus, the signifiers (the words that represent the meaning) remain the same, but the signified is altered. So the singling out of the verse from the totality of the poem modifies its content and enriches it with new meaning. Standing on its own, the verse "Vast is the prison" acquires individuality and independence, and appears like an empty (Berber) container or a blank page waiting to be filled with writing. One needs to read the novel to fill it with substance. An alternative explanation for the choice of this particular verse, besides its connection to Berber history, might be that it successfully encapsulates the feeling of imprisonment Djebar experiences within language and writing in general.

The section on the Berber alphabet brings together Djebar's skills as historian and novelist. She provides us with a brilliant reenactment of the discovery of the Berber alphabet through an exhaustive investigation of the lost alphabet, including reading of archives and epistolary documents extending for a period of more than two centuries. Historical figures are depicted in a very realistic way, thanks to minute details of daily life. Hence, we see the children of Dougga, a Roman city in what is now Tunisia, bringing Thomas d'Arcos some bread, cheese, and eggs while he is contemplating the inscriptions on the stone, or again when he begs his friend Peiresc to

send him a pair of glasses because he cannot read anymore. Other devices are used to bring these historical figures closer to us, such as the use of the pronoun we, which refers to the reader and the narrator, free indirect speech, or the mere presentation of the characters' feelings and thoughts by the omniscient narrator. At the same time, precise dates, detailed historical events, such as the destruction of Circa, the Punic wars, and the French invasion, and world-renowned historical figures, such as Flaubert, Camille Borgia, Napoleon, Shaw, Hamdane Khodja, Delacroix, Venture de Paradis, Polybius, and bey Ahmed, populate the text and remind the reader of its nonfictional aspect.

The rediscovery of the Berber alphabet starts in the seventeenth century with Thomas d'Arcos, who lives a comfortable life in Paris. Interested in Asian and African peoples' mores, he makes several trips around the Mediterranean, where he is captured by a corsair in 1628 and sold as a slave. D'Arcos bought his freedom but remained with his former master as a friend. It is in a letter to his friend Peiresc, dated October 1631, that he mentioned a monument where there are engraved letters that he believed to be Punic or Syriac:

> Et on en veoid encores quelques pières rompues. En la part méridionale, se retrouvent engravées es lettres que j'estime estre puniques, ou carthaginoises, ou bien syriaques. Et se lisent au revers comme l'hébreu, l'arabique et le chaldéen; elles contiennent un tiltre et sept lignes.[83]
>
> (And you can still see a few broken stones. In the Southern part, stones can be found engraved with letters I consider Punic or Carthaginian or Syriac. And they can be read backward as Hebrew, Arabic, or Chaldean; they have a title and seven lines.)

It was not until the 1860s that the "secret" was finally revealed: the inscriptions on the stele discovered by Thomas d'Arcos were Berber signs, which had since been forgotten. "Ce brave Thomas d'Arcos" opens this part of the novel. "Brave" immediately introduces this man as an innocuous and engaging fellow; we are far from a dry historical report. Indeed, Djebar recounts the process of rediscovering the long-lost alphabet as a captivating detective story or a quest for the grail. The suspense and curiosity are sustained through sentences such as these:

> Tout au long de ce XIXe siècle, le questionnement sur la stèle de Dougga a été interrogation sur un alphabet *disparu* et une langue *perdue* . . . A l'instar de Champollion, les paléographes se sentent

pénétrer dans une caverne d'images et *d'écritures palpitantes* certes, mais du *passé*. . . . Ecriture du soleil, *secret* fertile du *passé*! Étapes de cette *résurrection* de l'écriture *perdue*. . . . Le savant parisien est confronté à *l'énigme* suivante: le texte principal est en arabe; mais, latéralement, le bey Ahmed a tracé plusieurs lignes d'une écriture *secrète*"[84] (emphasis added).

(Throughout the nineteenth century, all the questions asked about the stele of Dougga focused on some vanished alphabet, some lost language. . . . Paleographers, following the example of Champollion, felt they were penetrating a cavern of images and scripts that were indeed exciting but from the past. . . . The writing of the sun, fertile secret of the past! This lost writing was resurrected in various stages. . . . The Parisian scholar is confronted by the following puzzle: The main text is in Arabic; but, running along the sides, the bey Ahmed has written several lines of a secret writing.[85]

The use of terms such as *disparue*, *perdue*, *passé*, *secret*, *resurrection*, and *énigme* underscores the excitement of the process of recovery and may even reveal the narrator's own desire, fueled by the novelty and secrecy of the research and its reenactment. The excitement gradually increases until the secret, the alphabet, is finally revealed; but, once discovered, the secret loses its appeal and falls into oblivion. With reference to the Greek historian Polybius, Djebar parallels his transmission to the rediscovery of the Dougga stele:

Est-ce pourquoi son œuvre comme la stèle de Dougga, après avoir alimenté, plusieurs siècles, l'appétit de savoir et la curiosité des successeurs, d'un coup, inopinément, par larges plaques, s'efface?[86]

(Is that why his work, like the stele of Dougga, after having fed the appetite for knowledge and the curiosity of his successors for several centuries, all at once, unexpectedly and in great slabs, is erased?)[87]

So the Dougga stele that supplied "appetite" and "curiosity" for centuries ends up being erased, forgotten. This paradoxical outcome, in which the discovered secret falls into oblivion, seemed to be shared by the narrator, for neither contentment nor pleasure is associated with the narrator's achievement, only a feeling on her part of alienation and exile, along with bitterness:

Tandis que le secret se dévoile, femmes et hommes, depuis l'oasis de Siwa en Egypte jusqu'à l'Atlantique, et même au-delà jusqu'aux îles

> Canaries, combien sont-ils encore—combien sommes-nous encore—toutes et tous à chanter, à pleurer, à hululer, mais aussi à aimer, installés plutôt dans l'impossibilité d'aimer—, oui, combien sommes-nous, bien qu'héritiers du bey Ahmed, des Touaregs du siècle dernier et des édiles bilingues de Dougga, à nous sentir exilés de leur première écriture?[88]
>
> (While the secret is revealed, how many women and men are there still, from the oasis of Siwa in Egypt to the Atlantic and even beyond—to the Canary Islands, how many of them—how many of us still—all singing, weeping, ululating, but also loving or rather being in a position where it is impossible to love—yes, how many of us are there who, although the heirs of the bey Ahmed, the Tuaregs of the last century and the *aediles*, bilingual Roman magistrates in charge of the monument of Dougga, feel exiled from their first writing?)[89]

This passage appears in the closing paragraph of the section on the rediscovery of the alphabet, and it comes just after the recapitulation of all the information gathered by Célestin Judas in the mid-nineteenth century. Djebar associates the end of the secret (i.e., its revelation) with "l'impossibilité d'aimer" (the impossibility of love) and with exile. The link between love and the alphabet also appears within the very structure of the novel. Two of the four parts that constitute the novel are called "effacement dans le coeur" (erased in the heart) and "effacement sur la pierre" (erased in stone); they invite the reader to connect both erasures: the one from the heart and the one on the stone. The erasure of the heart recounts the narrator's (Isma's) sudden passion for a young man, which tormented her until one day this love just faded away, erased due to its inadequacy. This desire is related to the desire triggered by the lost alphabet. Once rediscovered, the alphabet is erased from the stone in the same way the passion for the young man is erased from the narrator's heart. Djebar therefore links the failure of love to her alienation from Berber writing: "exilés de leur première écriture." The link between love and the alphabet is the feeling that prompts them both: desire or lack.

The resolution of her desire for the alphabet is a disappointment for Isma, the narrator—though she is unnamed in this part, the narrator is the same throughout the novel. Far from being "satisfied," the narrator feels a deep sense of lack, incompleteness, and thus frustration. The narrator's sense of alienation is sorely felt, as if she had hoped that some relief would come from history. Instead, she feels betrayed: she realized that she has been following a dream, that history doesn't provide her with a sense of belonging,

because she feels alienated, detached from it. It lured her just as the passion for l'Aimé lured her. The idea of a "secret to be discovered" is exciting, and it is narrated with much enthusiasm, but when the secret is finally revealed, it loses all of its attraction. In the end, the Berber alphabet recovered in a very realistic way is doomed to be forgotten. The final word of the section of the novel on the alphabet is *effacement*: "Comme si cette poussée scripturaire sécrétait un risque, une accélération vers l'inévitable effacement!"[90] (As if this literary ascendance exuded some danger, some acceleration toward its own erasure that would prove inevitable!)[91] This word puts an end to the whole episode on the alphabet, which returns to its nonexistence.

In this treatment of the Berber alphabet, in the section titled "L'effacement sur la pierre," we can only assume that the writer strives for a reappropriation of the Berber past, or at least a confrontation with it. But such an endeavor is, once again, a personal one, and when it is deemed unsatisfactory, the recovery is abandoned. This reading might finally shed some light on the epigraph to "L'effacement sur la pierre":

> J'avais peut-être enterré l'alphabet. Je ne sais pas au fond de quelle nuit. Son gravier crissait sous mes pas. Un alphabet que je n'employais ni pour penser ni pour écrire, mais pour passer des frontières. . . . Ch. Dobzynski, Prologue à Alphabase.[92]
>
> (I had buried the alphabet, perhaps. In the depths of I do not know what darkness. Its gravel crunched underfoot. An alphabet that I did not use to think or to write, but to cross borders . . .)[93]

In this excerpt, the (quoted) author buried the alphabet, although its ghostly presence can still be felt. The narrator exhumed the Berber alphabet, but there was little she could do with it since she felt alienated from it, other than feeling its ghostly presence. This epigraph summarizes the status of the alphabet at the end of the chapter: it is a pervasive, cumbersome presence, which the narrator uses as an allegorical passage (passer des frontières) between the lack and its impossible fulfillment, which is desire.

In *Vaste est la prison*, the quest for the alphabet is the means by which the narrator expresses her sense of a lack. The Berber dimension, as imagined by the narrator, matches the narrator's state of mind throughout the novel, even though Berbers are imagined and are ghosts, phantoms of the past, and reminders of an absence/presence. Likewise, the relationship to the Berbers is revealed through their use as a trope to convey the narrator's desire for self-knowledge and the torment she endures. The narrator, it turns out, treasures this desire, relishes it, and definitely prefers it to a

fictitious satisfaction that, say, the rediscovery of the Berber alphabet, could provide. Hence the fate of the alphabet, returned to oblivion.

The fact is that the Berber alphabet, exhumed from history, has a new life today as part of contemporary North African reality—Algerians and Moroccans, even Libyans, have reappropriated it and struggle to use it, sometimes in spite of governmental opposition—though this does not concern the author here. And it is because of this lack of engagement and absence of connection to the present that *Vaste est la prison* fails to articulate an engaged position vis-à-vis Berber history and language and fails to reappropriate the denied Berber past of Algeria by reinscribing it in the present. Instead, at the end of the section on the Berber alphabet, Djebar seals the door on this episode, which indirectly refutes the idea of the permanence of the Berber language and alphabet.[94]

This gesture calls to mind Algeria's official discourse about the Berbers, who are at best confined to the past. Indeed, Berbers do not appear in the 1964 Charte d'Alger, which clearly defines Algeria as an Arabo-Muslim country. The Charte nationale of 1976 reiterates that the Algerian people are exclusively defined as Arab and Muslim, and that these two essential characteristics are the only guarantee of the unity of the country. It was only after the events of the Berber Spring in 1980 that the Charte nationale, in 1986, retraced Algerian history from antiquity to the present and mentioned Berber historical figures, such as Massinissa and Jugurtha, in their resistance against Rome. This concession is obviously truncated, as Salem Chaker and Dahbia Abrous argue when they claim that the Berber past is acknowledged as long as it remains circumscribed in antiquity.[95] Indeed, acknowledgment of the Berber past is innocuous when dissociated from the present. In an article in which they retrace the progressive emergence of the mention of the Berbers in Algerian official documents, Chaker and Abrous declare that apart from Berber antiquity, as it is referred to in the 1986 National Charter, the Berber dimension of Algeria was hidden in periphrasis, thereby avoiding naming it, and was described in conjunction with phrases such as "arts et traditions populaires" (popular and traditional arts) that further mask the Berber everyday reality. The authors claim that, as a consequence, one is implicitly led to believe that the museum is the sole place where one might find the remnants of Berber antiquity today, an idea confirmed by the opening of a National Institute for Popular Culture (Institut National Supérieur de la Culture Populaire) in Tlemcen in 1987.[96]

By contrast, in *Vaste est la prison*, Djebar provides a well-documented narrative of the rediscovery of the Berber alphabet. The discovery hinges on the recognition that the Libyc and Berber writing systems are one and the

same, with a few variations, and that this alphabet had never ceased to exist for millennia, but its link to the spoken language had been forgotten. In the 1860s, while the language was still spoken and the alphabet was still used by the Tuaregs, the link between the oral and the written components of the language was finally reestablished by scholars. So Djebar has also re-created the conditions under which the invisible link between a spoken language and its millennium-old writing system was uncovered. However, this operation, one of re-creation, is confined to the past, and the link to the present, which was made in 1860, is not found in Djebar's text. The reason for the failure to fully recover this episode of Berber history could be attributed to the narrator's desire to seek personal relief from it, to find an escape from her torment. The re-creation of these vital links between Berber history and the present does not provide consolation and therefore calls for an evacuation, which finds its realization in the "effacement" of the signs on the stele.

The Genealogy of a Loss

Djebar's relationship to the Berber language is complex and ambiguous and a decisive feature of her work. In other sections of the novel, Djebar reflects upon her past life through Isma's reminiscences and tries to locate the loss of the Berber language. And just like her relationship to Berber women, it is in childhood that she can locate her singular relationship to the Berber language.

The narrator associates the first appearance of the Berber language in her life with a very traumatic experience, that of rejection. Indeed, her birth was unwished for by her mother: the highly valued status of motherhood—entailing power and accrued respect—can only be acquired through the birth of a baby boy. But the Berber midwife welcomed her and predicted in her language the baby's nomadic future. This initial umbilical severance, the maternal rejection and the anticipated departure—that is, another separation—creates an existence rooted in rejection and lack. But the scene that contains the severance with the Berber language is tied to the birth of the baby brother, thirteen months after the narrator's own birth. The baby is beautiful and cherished and even—claimed the grandmother in front of the skeptical mother—speaks Berber. The baby dies six months later:

> Mort et enterré le même jour, mon petit! La langue, avec lui, s'est étouffée, c'est sûr. Il est entré bouche ouverte dans la terre; les mains, doigts écartés, et les yeux. . . . Ses yeux, je me réveille encore la nuit et je les regarde, je fixe leur bleu![97]

(Dead and buried the same day, my baby! The language was smothered with him, I know. He went into the earth with his mouth open; fingers spread wide on his hands, and his eyes. . . . His eyes, I still wake up at night and see them, I stare into their blue!)[98]

The above scene in which the baby dies, along with the Berber language and the reaction of the mother who wakes up at night to stare at his blue eyes, is clearly a scene reconstructed from the narrator's perspective. The phrase "La langue avec lui, s'est étouffée, c'est sûr" cannot belong to the mother, who claimed that her baby could not have uttered Berber sounds simply because they were not pronounced at home. Therefore, the phrase belongs to the narrator, who wishes that the preferred baby and the language he was supposed to have babbled were buried together. To bury the baby (and the language he comes to be associated with) is to bury the object of her mother's desire, the answer to her prayers, which excluded the narrator's existence. To suffocate, "étouffer," is to deprive the baby of air, and also suggests a suppression of language (effacement?), a gasp. Given that the baby died of dehydration and not of suffocation, "il avait perdu toute son eau"[99] (he had become completely dehydrated), the reference to suffocation reveals an unconscious wish of suppression, maybe even a murder wish.

The death of the baby brother is related to the narrator's attempt to locate the lost language, although it is really about a more profound loss that has to do with the narrator's very existence. The narrator suggests other locations for the loss of language: at age two, when her mother departed from the mountains to the city, and a little later, at age six, when her mother lost her beloved sister Cherifa and became mute. All three possible origins of the rupture/loss are associated with afflictive experiences—deaths or departure—and with the narrator's mother. While Fatima, the grandmother, was the first fugitive, the narrator seems to suggest that her mother starts another tradition, one of erasure of the Berber language:

Cette langue dont fillette elle a voulu se détourner, d'un coup s'est évaporée: en elle, autour d'elle. Et l'enfant mort est resté pour toujours, en sa mémoire-tombe, l'enfant endormi.[100]

(This language the little girl had wanted to turn away from, all at once was gone—within her, around her. And the dead child remained entombed in her memory forever, the sleeping child.)[101]

Significantly, the chapter ends with the baby boy, who, even dead, continues to live in his mother's imagination. The myth of the "sleeping child" (l'enfant endormi) refers to the belief that a baby stops its growth in its mother's

womb because of some shock. The baby can "sleep" for weeks, months, even years before "waking" up and resuming its development. The narrator's mother, in her refusal to accept the death of her child, turns him into a "sleeping child," thus waiting for his awakening and thereby dismissing her other child, the narrator. The term "mémoire-tombe" ties memory to death, as illustrated by the mother's fixation upon a past that invades the present. The mother's denial of the baby's death only emphasizes the disavowal of the existence of her daughter. This lack of recognition is the ineffable loss the narrator is striving to express.

The Berber language, because of its immemorial past; because of its pervasive and obstinate presence in the culture, language, and history of Algeria; but above all because of its paradoxical absence or eradication from the narrator's life is the perfect vessel to represent the indefinable loss that the narrator originally suffered. The language is constantly associated with deaths (the baby boy and Cherifa) and departures (the mother's and the grandmother's). It has become a metaphor for rupture, hence the narrator's ambiguous attitude toward the recovery of the Berber alphabet.

Interestingly, the narrator's desire to relinquish or forget the language finds its prolongation in the way the language is generally perceived in Algeria. The Berber language is often looked down upon by city dwellers and associated with backward customs and rough life in the mountains. Forgetting it becomes a sign of sophistication and progress. During Cherifa's mourning, the city women are condescending toward the parent from the mountain who was lamenting in Berber. They only want to understand the language of the city, writes the narrator: "les citadines qui ne voulaient comprendre que le dialecte de la ville"[102] (the city women who only cared to understand in the dialect of the city[103]), which emphasizes the real will at work in order to forget the language, a movement similar to her mother's when she turned her back on the mountain and on the language,[104] and which developed into a refusal, a denial, "A moins que cet oubli, que ce refus, que ce reniement . . ."[105] ("Unless this forgetting, this refusal, this denial . . ."[106]).

In a compelling and moving short text published in 1998 and titled "Les yeux de la langue," Djebar delivered a poetic rendering of her ambiguous feelings toward the "first language" ("la première").[107] This relationship is fraught with conflicted feelings and pain that find their origin in the failure to meet or unite in the past, "la langue primitive qu'on prétend barbare, aurait voulu danser en toi et te faire danser . . . elle dans laquelle sans fêlure, sans blessure, du premier coup, tu aurais virevolté!"[108] (the primitive language believed to be barbarian would have wanted to dance in you and make you dance . . . the one in which, without crack, without injury and

right away, you would have twirled around!). It is a missed opportunity that triggered feelings of resentment toward the language. But since then Djebar claims to have lived other experiences, learned other languages, and forgotten the original language, "tu oubliais la primitive"[109] (you forgot the primitive one). However, now the language has returned from oblivion, a return associated with the death of the father, as if the language was the father's legacy transmitted from beyond the grave. We should note that once again the Berber language is associated with loss and death. But the language is back with a vengeance, for now it is endowed with eyes staring at the author, "les yeux de la langue" (the eyes of the language). Djebar finds herself caught between the desire to refuse, the freedom to say no to the language that returned to her too late, "tu devrais dire non à celle qui prétend te revenir"[110] (you should say no to the one who pretends to come back to you), and the deference to her father's (and country's) legacy. The eye/I of the language exacerbates the author's discomfort and resentment—as one would in the face of a cruel stepmother in need—and this only generates a stronger rejection from the author. The text appropriately ends with the following sentence: "Dire non à ces yeux. A tes yeux, langue Berbère!"[111] (To say no to these eyes. To your eyes, Berber language). And so we imagine that Djebar will continue resisting the language while the latter continues to inhabit her, torment her, and slowly "devour" her: "La langue qui dévore"[112] (The language that devours). Clearly, in this text the Berber language is as cumbersome a burden as ever, although Djebar cannot detach herself from it because it is part of her, a situation reminiscent of Baudelaire's *Chacun sa chimère*, where men carry on their backs chimeras that are both necessary and oppressive to their lives, or, to use an analogy closer to Djebar, Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus*, where Sisyphus is condemned to repeat the same task forever, which seems to be Djebar's curse: to continue fighting her demons, among which is the Berber language.

Conclusion

Sometimes a book is just a scholarly story that the writer feels must be told. This one was initially inspired by my concern for a kind of cultural oppression, one with which I am familiar due to my Berber ancestry and background.

My first objective in this book was to offer a tracing of the rise of Kabyle-Berber identity in the twentieth century, a communal imagining, as Benedict Anderson might put it, which I have argued hinges on cultural examples, especially literary texts. Books, poems, songs, and manifestoes here are not merely artifacts with which we might read the history of this movement; rather, they are the mechanisms, the imaginings, as it were, the identity thing itself. The work of Feraoun, the Amrouche family, Matoub, and others is not a reflection, then, but the very oral and textual flesh with which Kabyle communal and national politics cohere today.

My second objective was personal and also specific to the literary and cultural texts I have addressed here. Whether retracing the Kabyle-Berber presence through allusions or references in colonial texts, reinstating their place in the emergence of francophone literature in Algeria and in Beur literature, or discussing Tahar Djaout's writing of resilience and Lounès Matoub's songs of resistance, the aim of this book was to both create a space that was denied to these Berbers and to show that the struggle for communal identity and culture took place through the practice of dialogue.

We Are Imazighen is about how we understand culture and produce texts and films from the perspective of the minority, marginalized, or dominated, or from the standpoint of people who are simply dismissed (or dubbed "an invented people"). But this perspective is not fixed, and neither are the claims one makes about one's difference. What it means to be a Berber itself has transformed over the years and evolved in content and meaning. The path that has led to self-consciousness and communal claims is the one that this book aims to retrace.

Of Berber Denial

In 1972 Mouloud Mammeri wrote an essay introducing his play *Le banquet*, titled "La mort absurde des aztèques," in which he laments the disappearance of the Aztec civilization: twenty centuries of civilization wiped off the face of the earth within a few months. On some level, Mammeri was also thinking of the Berbers, whom he feared might meet the same fate. In this essay Mammeri reflects upon the conjunction of difference and resistance. Absolute difference clearly does not exist, but when people strive to maintain or claim their difference, it is often a difficult task, given that they are always already guilty of the crime of being other. Their task is also complicated by the kind of resistance one offers to a world that is more and more homogeneous. Mammeri cautions against dwelling on the past and embracing everything in a conception of nature (or culture) reinvented, moving backward and cut off from the realities of the present. Difference should be lived in a present time that nourishes it. Moreover, difference and diversity should be acknowledged and valorized, in order to ward off homogeneity, monolingualism, and monoculture, and to prevent regrettable choices made by those claiming a difference. Specifically, Mammeri mentions the Bretons, who believed they found in Nazism an expression of their Celticness. Mammeri does not blame the Bretons but rather those who pushed them to these desperate extremes; he declares that there are entire continents of Celts, and "we are all Celts." Indeed, we are all Celts in the same way that we should embrace the history of the Aztecs, which is not only the Aztecs' history but our very own, in a holistic sense. The same is true for Berbers. Berber history and culture belongs not only to the Berbers but to all of us and should be construed that way. What I have demonstrated in this book is that this has rarely been understood, though fortunately things are evolving. I offer here a brief overview of the recent changes that have taken place in North Africa regarding the Berber language and culture, as well as a glimpse of the challenges Berbers continue to face in the new millennium.

One could argue that with the advent of the twenty-first century there has been as much in North Africa that is Berber as there has been Arab with the attendant Arab Springs. Indeed, crucial victories have been won in the past few years alone, and what I call the Berber dimension has now fully emerged in North Africa, making it an integral part of the current political and intellectual scene. The first significant event was in Algeria, when, in 1995, after a full year of school boycotting in Kabylia, called the "strike of the school bag" (la grève du cartable), the government created the Haut

commissariat à l'amazighité (HCA), an institute that promotes the Amazigh culture in Algeria. The creation of the HCA was followed in 1996 by the mention of the Amazigh dimension of Algerian identity in the constitution.

In 2001 the Moroccan government created the Institut royal de la culture amazighe (IRCAM), an academic institute whose objective is to preserve and promote Amazigh culture. In 2002 Algeria officially recognized Tamazight as a national language. Finally, in 2011 Morocco distinguished itself from its neighbors by granting Tamazight official-language status, making Morocco the first country in North Africa to recognize the Berber language in this way.

Eastward, Berber Libyans have struggled since the fall of Qadhafi to incorporate the Amazigh dimension into the new Libyan constitution, while an Amazigh renaissance is growing in Tunisia. In addition to these important events, a transnational Amazigh nongovernmental organization, the CMA (Amazigh World Congress), was created in 1997 in the Canary Islands, a group that brings together Berber associations from all of North Africa and the diaspora.

These victories and renewed efforts and awareness deserve to be celebrated after a long nightmare of Berber denial. The taboo surrounding the Berber question has now been lifted, so some people might see the Berber case as closed, but it has just opened. To make a bold analogy, the end of segregation did not eradicate racism in the United States. The execution of the law, when there is one, and changes in mentality are different matters and take time to converge. Moreover, these achievements are only a first step toward the recognition of the Berber language and culture, and much remains to be done to secure these first successes.

One of the arguments that continues to be made despite the recent official recognition of Tamazight in Algeria and Morocco is that the features of Berber identity are minimal and that overall they are not different from their fellow compatriots. Also, the facts that the Berber language spoken in some regions of North Africa contains many Arabic words and roots, that there are fewer and fewer monolingual Berbers, and that the vast majority of Berbers are also Muslim are often used as grounds to dismiss Berber specificities and claims. Ancillary to this reasoning is the argument that foreign influence is to account for Berber identity, an insidious argument that continues to be made, as though Berber self-proclamations were null, while other voices, including Western ones, are the ones that really count. Indeed, as the argument runs, if some Berbers are so adamant about their difference, it is not because they are that different from their compatriots but because their minor differences were overemphasized, if not fabricated,

by the French during the period of colonization—at least for the Berbers who were colonized by France. As I finalize this book for publication, I feel compelled to report a recent discussion I had in April 2013 with a prominent francophone writer from the Caribbean, who bluntly confessed thinking that the Berbers were a creation of the French: old habits die hard. This exchange confirms that this book is not obsolete but long overdue.

The so-called French connection has been a blessing and a curse for Berbers in general. It is undeniable that Berbers benefited from the academic research of French scholars and administrators concerning their language, culture, and history—whose motivations included but were not limited to a divide-and-conquer strategy. This body of work was used by Berbers as a foil to both react against and reflect upon Berber identity, but it is not an exaggeration to claim that Berbers are still paying the price for this French "interest" today—despite the fact that, as claimed in this book, this interest did not translate into any concrete examples of preferential treatment.

The conflation of Berber claims and foreign influence was carried into the twenty-first century. One example concerns an Algerian political party, the RCD, Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (Union for Culture and Democracy), which is a secular political party in Kabylia. Hugh Roberts, an expert on Algerian history, construed the very creation of this party as the result of French influence and a dismissal of Kabyles' Muslim roots and tradition.[1] I do not claim that Berbers are immune to outside influence; on the contrary, I emphasize that their entire history is about such influence—and resistance, as I have shown here. European influence (ideas, techniques, and ways) is especially important if only because of the early and sustained immigration that links Berbers to Europe, where millions of Berbers live today. Obviously, the problem is not whether one is influenced by one's surroundings, because we are constantly influenced, often unwittingly, and we do not consider it an offense. The problem is, the very idea that the former colony could have an effect on and, worse, inspire—a likely upshot, given the shared colonial history—the Berbers, a people that continues to bear the colonial French interest like the mark of Cain, is simply intolerable for some scholars and ideologues. One rationale that scholars would invoke here is that in order to "decolonize" the national mindset, to ensure that French culture, language, and influence are totally obliterated from North Africa, the new nation, Algeria, or any postcolonial state must reconnect to a putative past—though not too far back either, for one might fall into "Berberdom." This last example is the kind of dubious national consciousness of the new ruling elite against which Fanon warned in *Les damnés de la terre*. The "French influence" does not sit well with

some postcolonial scholars either, for they have been trained to be critical vis-à-vis the colonial order and often seek to champion an "authentic" North African self—which, interestingly, is construed as being based on the Arabic language and Islam, converging therefore with the discourse of the North African authoritarian regimes since the independences—and are quick to condemn anything that might be tainted by the former colony.

What is fascinating here is the role Berbers continue to play in people's imaginations—in Algeria and in the West, especially Western universities, that is. For historical and psychological reasons, the legacy of Berber denial is worth analyzing in detail in a future project; Berbers continue to be the scapegoat for all sorts of fears, resentments, and projections. Besides dramatizing Berbers' Western influence and accusing them of having ties with the CIA and Israel and of plotting against their respective countries, Berbers embody the angst associated with North African identity. This is in part why some politicians and heads of state (as in Tunisia and Libya) publicly declared their Berber population to be totally assimilated or to have vanished—the other side of the same coin is to use the empty slogan "we are all Berbers," which, unlike Mammeri's sincere and thoughtful declaration "we are all Celts," preempts any further discussion on the topic.

Recent Development

Today, some intellectuals are finally coming to terms with North Africa's Berber dimension, and changes are occurring at a deeper level as well. Historically, the silence of North African intellectuals on the Berber question has been deafening (with the notable exception of Kateb Yacine): either they did not feel concerned with the issue or they simply sided with the views of their respective government, for the topic of ethnic and cultural diversity in North Africa is a risky one. However, some writers have recently grappled with Algeria's Berber heritage.

It is especially the case for several Algerian writers, such as Boualem Sansal, who has been very vocal about the need for Algeria to face its history and accept its diversity and rich heritage. Doing this entails reconnecting with Algeria's Berber dimension, which has long been submerged. In his *Petit* éloge *de la mémoire*, published in 2007, Sansal explores the history of the Algerian people through the ages, using a speleology metaphor to describe the introspection of one's soul, memory, and history.

Author and journalist Mohamed Benchicou is another example. In *Le mensonge de Dieu*, published in 2011, Benchicou offers a vast human fresco of the Algerian people told through the family saga of Belaïd, a Berber

ancestor, running from 1870 to 2007. The author enthusiastically embraces Algeria's Berberness, which in turn underpins his 650-page novel without prejudice, and in a forthright and simple manner.

Even the former governor of the Algerian bank, Abderrahmane Hadj Nacer, calls on Algerians to reconcile among themselves, a gesture that entails acknowledging the Berber dimension of their identity. In his book *La martingale algérienne: Réflexions sur une crise*, published in 2011, where he refers to North Africa as Tamazgha, he evaluates the Algerian economic system and points to a lack of self-consciousness as a major factor in its dysfunction. Economic development, argues the bureaucrat, requires a sense of self based on the knowledge of one's history and culture.

To be fair, the renowned writer Mohammed Dib initiated this movement for communal awareness, though in a much subtler way, a few years before he passed away. Indeed, in his 1998 novel, *Si Diable veut*, which is a reflection on the human condition, the setting and the characters are obviously Berber, although the author never explicitly says so.

These latest developments are encouraging. They attest to the possibility of an eventual acknowledgement of North Africa's Berber heritage even by those who do not consider themselves Berbers. More challenges await the region, as Berbers (and Berbers from the diaspora) who have kept their heritage alive now demand the rights and the means to continue preserving their heritage while promoting it, as has been the case in Morocco and Algeria and more recently in Libya. Addressing this question requires more than an admission of North Africa's Berber heritage and the Berber dimension of its identity. Given that Berbers themselves are not of one mind about how to tackle their heritage, the next millennium must include a regimen of debate, tolerance, and conciliation, along with dialectical interactions in which the other, whoever this other might be, is acknowledged in his/her unthreatening presence.

Notes

Introduction

1. Lecture at the University of Paris VIII, spring 1987. The statement was first made by Portuguese writer Miguel Torga.

2. I discuss my use of the terms "Amazigh," "Berber," and "Kabyle" later in the introduction. Here, I use the term "Berber" as a general category that includes the Kabyles of Algeria, the most outspoken Berber group in North Africa.

3. Ibn Khaldun, *Histoire des berbères*.

4. For instance, the University of Paris VIII, one of the few places in France that provides courses on the Berber language and civilization, offers these courses under the aegis of the department of "undervalued" languages and cultures (Département des Langues et Cultures Minorisées), alongside Basque, Breton, Nahualtl, Occitan, Quechua, and Tamil.

5. A good example of this transformation of labor is the concept of Tiwizi, which could be translated as "solidarity." It exists in collective work, in which villagers help someone build a house, harvest a person's fields, and so on. The individual would provide the same help to others in return. Tiwizi is also involved in projects of common interest, such as cleaning rivers or springs, building roads, and so on.

6. The term Berber comes from the Greek *barbaroi* and the Arabic *brabra* or *berbera*, which denote someone whose language cannot be understood. The term Kabyle comes from the Arabic *qabila*, which means either "tribe" or the verb "to accept"—i.e., to accept Islam.

7. For the entire poem, see http://www.amazighworld.org/culture/poesie/kker_a_mmis_umazigh.php.

8. Barrat, *Espoir et parole*, 19. All English translations in the book are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

9. Feraoun, *L'anniversaire*, 36.

10. The term *indigène* became offensive, especially after the French created the Code de l'indigénat, an administrative policy that applied only to the indigenous people of certain colonies, such as the one in Algeria.

11. Feraoun, *Lettres à ses amis*, 61.

12. "Les Français d'Algérie sont eux aussi, et au sens fort du terme, des indigènes." (The French from Algeria are also, in the fullest sense of the term, indigenous.) Camus, *Actuelles, III*, 1013.

13. Feraoun, *L'anniversaire*, 40–42.

14. *Pied-noir* denotes the population of European origin that left Algeria after the country's independence. It began as a derogatory term, refused at first but later reclaimed and embraced. In France, there is a recent phenomenon where people claim a *pied-noir* identity. See Jordi, "Les pieds-noirs."

15. The term Muslim Algerians (or simply Muslims) was also used to distinguish the indigenous populations from the population of European descent.

16. It is also true in France, where the youth of North African descent use the term Arab to refer to themselves, even though they might not culturally and linguistically be Arab. See chapter 3.

17. Other Berber languages in Algeria include Tachenwit, Tachawit, Tamzabit, and Tamacheq.

18. As will be discussed in chapter 3, the Berber claims of the 1980s were not limited to the defense of the Berber language and culture but also included a number of other demands, such as the recognition of Algerian Arabic (Darija, as opposed to Modern Standard Arabic), as well as the granting of other democratic rights.

19. This movement is presently marginal among the Kabyle population in Algeria as well as in the diaspora (most of its militants, as well as its leader, live outside of Algeria).

20. The root of this name is found in Herodotus, who spoke of the Maxyes, a term whose derived forms (Macares, Maxues, Mazices) appear in other authors' work. Saint Hippolytus puts the Mazices at the same level as the Mauri, the Gaetuli, and the Afri. Servier, *Les berbères*, 10–11.

21. For more information on this first congress, see Kratochwil, "Some Observations on the First Amazigh World Congress."

22. Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique*, 12.

23. Servier, *Les berbères*, 17.

24. Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique*, 11.

25. Ibid., 12.

26. Camps, *Encyclopédie de la méditerranée*, 11.

27. Servier, *Les berbères*, 37.

28. Ibid., 38.

Chapter 1. The Emergence of Berber Consciousness, 1930–1949

1. Marie Cardinal was a *pied-noir* feminist writer born in Algiers in 1929.

2. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, vii.

3. In particular, see Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments*, chapter 11.

4. Basset, *Essai sur la littérature des Berbères*.

5. See the important works of linguist Chaker, *Imazighen Ass-a*; T. Yacine, *Chacal ou la ruse des dominés*; Silverstein, *Algeria in France*; Merolla, *De l'art de la narration Tamazight;* and Goodman, *Berber Culture on the World Stage*. There are also an overwhelming number of twentieth-century anthropological studies of Berbers, particularly on Morocco. Suffice it to cite Gellner's *Arabs and Berbers*, Crawford's *Moroccan Households in the World Economy*, and Hoffman's *We Share Walls.*

6. Ethnologist Marceau Gast, in his article on Gabriel Camps, recalls the time in

the 1970s when official voices in Algeria declared that Berbers were the creation of the "white fathers," i.e., the French missionaries. See Gast, "Gabriel Camps."

7. See Layachi, "Berbers in Algeria." Layachi calls for the state to acknowledge the diversity of Algeria and to transition to a democratic system based on a just and fair economic and social system. He cautions that without this transformation, Algeria faces a growing Berber secessionist movement on the scale of the Islamist rebellion of 1992.

8. Khalil, *Arab Avant-Garde Experiments*.

9. Joubert, ed. *Littératures francophones*.

10. Historian Phillip C. Naylor calls this insurrection "the greatest threat to the French presence." Naylor, *France and Algeria*, 155.

11. "Il faut écouter le Maghreb résonner dans sa pluralité (linguistique, culturelle, politique)." Khatibi, *Maghreb pluriel*, 39.

12. Khatibi, *Maghreb pluriel*, 12.

13. Khatibi, *Penser le Maghreb*, 7.

14. Khatibi, *Maghreb pluriel*, 18.

15. Mahfoufi, *Chants Kabyles*, 11.

16. Ibid., 12.

17. On Maghreb, see Monego, *Maghrebian Literature in French*; and Déjeux, *Maghreb littératures*. On Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian literature, see Dunwoodie, *Writing French Algeria*; Gontard, *La violence du texte*; Fontaine, *La littérature tunisienne contemporaine*; and Bonn, *La littérature algérienne*. Algerian writer Assia Djebar is discussed at length in Erickson's *Islam and Postcolonial Narrative* and Cooke's *Women Claim Islam*. See also Dugas, *La littérature judéo-maghrébine*. On gender categories, see Déjeux, *La littérature féminine*.

18. Boudraa and Krause, *North African Mosaic*.

19. Ageron, "Du mythe kabyle aux politiques berbères," 331–48.

20. Hoisington, "Cities in Revolt."

21. Historian Mahfoud Kaddache affirms that the Kabyle Myth indeed inspired a French policy, which failed, according to him, because of the absence of significant difference between Arabs and Kabyles. Kaddache, in his effort to condemn the French construction that opposed Kabyles and Arabs, denies Kabyles any noteworthy specificity and claims their primordial attachment to the Arabic language and Islam. Kaddache, "L'utilisation du fait berbère," 277. Charles-Robert Ageron denies the existence of any Kabyle policy during the second empire. He adds that it is after the insurrection of 1871 in Kabylia that the only experience of the assimilation of the Kabyles took place. It lasted five years and its objective was to fuse the European and Kabyle "races." This policy failed because of the passive resistance of the Kabyles and the protests of the European settlers. Ageron, "La France a-t-elle eu une politique kabyle?"

22. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities*, 3.

23. Some writers, such as Mouloud Feraoun, are sometimes discussed as Berbers, or Kabyles. Their distinctiveness, however, is always conceived and understood as part of a larger Arab-Muslim identity.

24. The very word Algeria was coined by the French in 1839 to replace the phrase "French possessions in North Africa." By the turn of the century, Europeans of Algeria

started calling themselves "Algerians." From then on, the term "Algerian" was used to refer to the population of European descent in Algeria until the 1930s. For this reason and to avoid confusion, I use the term Algerian to refer to the settlers of European descent until the late 1930s–'40s, when a nationalist consciousness gained momentum in Algeria. Until then, I simply use the word *indigenous* to refer to the Arabs and Berbers.

25. In her study on French travelers in the nineteenth century, Victoria Thompson writes, "French travelers linked questions of the body and sexuality to a discussion not only of their own identity, but also of the French role in Algeria." Thompson, "'I Went Pale with Pleasure,'" 28–29.

26. Graebner, *History's Place*, 33.

27. Mahé, "Violence et littérature coloniale au Maghreb," 178.

28. Dunwoodie, *Writing French Algeria*, 91–92.

29. Bertrand, *Les villes d'or Algérie et Tunisie romaines*, 9.

30. Ibid., 7.

31. Ibid.

32. Quoted in Adam, "Polémiques autour du premier," 19.

33. Randau, Preface to *L'anthologie des treize poètes algériens*, xiv.

34. Ibid., xi.

35. Ibid., xvii–xviii.

36. Ibid., xiv.

37. Adam, "Polémiques autour du premier," 24.

38. A *spahi* is a soldier in the native Algerian cavalry in the French army.

39. Randau, *Cassard le berbère*, 173.

40. Ibid., 156.

41. Ibid., 157–58.

42. Ibid., 168–69.

43. Ibid., 169.

44. See Martini, "Randau, un homme multiple." Martini's article explores the many ways in which the character of Cassard corresponds to Randau's self-portrait.

45. Randau, *Cassard le berbère*, 168.

46. Ibid., 166.

47. See Crespo, "Randau et la société coloniale," 233.

48. Randau, *Cassard le berbère*, 13.

49. Claude Liauzu claims that the Algerianists were settlers who discovered themselves as partially Berber and strove to give rise to a young Franco-Berber people ("Les algérianistes sont donc des colons, mais des colons qui se découvrent, sans répulsion, une origine partiellement berbère . . . et qui œuvrent à la naissance d'un jeune peuple franco-berbère.'") Liauzu, "Gabriel Audisio, Albert Camus et Jean Sénac," 162.

50. Ferdinand Duchêne's novels include *Au pied des monts éternels*, *Roman berbère*; *La Rek'ba*; *Le Berger d'Akfadou*; and *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss, Roman Kabyle*. Some of these novels were collected under the title *Les barbaresques*.

51. Duchêne, *La Rek'ba*, 4.

52. Duchêne, *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss*, 251.

53. Duchêne, *La Rek'ba*, 3.

54. Ibid., 6.

55. Ibid., 5.

56. Duchêne, *Au pied des monts éternels*, 7.

57. Bousquet, *Justice française*, 37.

58. Duchêne, *L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss*, 34.

59. Ibid., 173.

60. See Duchêne's declaration in *La Rek'ba*, 7.

61. See Dunwoodie, *Writing French Algeria*, 176.

62. Témime, "Repenser l'espace méditerranéen," 60.

63. See Dunwoodie, *Writing French Algeria*, 185.

64. Ibid., 248.

65. Gabriel Audisio claimed that the future people of Algeria will be a synthesis of Mediterranean races cemented by French culture ("constitue un mélange en train de se fixer, qui sera l'Algérie, une synthèse des races méditerranéennes cimentées par la culture française"). Audisio, *Jeunesse de la méditerranée*, 112.

66. Gabriel Audisio's creed was "if France is my nation, Marseille, my city, my homeland is the sea, the Mediterranean from end to end" ("si la France est ma nation, si Marseille est ma cité, ma patrie, c'est la mer, la Méditerranée, de bout en bout"). Audisio, *Jeunesse de la méditerranée*, 21–24.

67. Feraoun, *L'anniversaire*, 55.

68. In "La littérature algérienne," Feraoun also comments that it is the deliberate refusal of writers such as Camus, Roblès, and Moussy to testify on behalf of the colonized that created vocations among the colonized to testify in their turn and for themselves. Feraoun, *L'anniversaire*, 55.

69. While Europeans appropriated the term Algerian at the turn of the century to refer to themselves, "Algerian fiction" here refers to the literary works of indigenous writers. I did not use the term Algerian until now, in order to prevent any confusion with the Algerianists. Moreover, as a broad category, Algerian literature is comprised of all of Algeria's literary production, including that of its European writers.

70. "Pour exalter la gloire d'une nation qui a su réveiller les élans chevaleresques d'un peuple jadis endormi." Déjeux, *Maghreb littératures de langue française*, 32.

71. In the preface to Chukri Khodja's novel *Mamoun*, Vital-Mareille, the secretary-general of the Société des Ecrivains de Province, writes, "The author is an Arab whose clear intelligence has assimilated our civilization exceptionally well. Not only has he learnt our difficult language, how to speak it and implement its endless nuances. He has understood the French soul, and all of the refinement and beauty it brings to peoples." Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing*, 299.

72. Ibid., 300.

73. Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne*, and Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing*.

74. See, for example, Abdelkebir Khatibi's *Le roman maghrébin*, where these authors are not even mentioned, except for Hadj Hamou, who appears in a footnote. Important voices in North African literary studies, such as Jean Déjeux, Albert Memmi, and more recent scholars, have often ignored or undervalued this early corpus.

75. See Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne*, 156.

76. Ibid., 152.

77. Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing*, 302.

78. Graebner, *History's Place*, 108.

79. Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing*, 103–4.

80. The exception was the ENA (Étoile Nord Africaine). Created in 1927 in France by immigrants, it had already demanded the independence of North Africa.

81. Graebner, *History's Place*, 132.

82. "In the struggle for enfranchisement of the *indigènes*, many proponents of citizenship declared that decorated veterans should be the first to be so rewarded. Proving one's valor and loyalty had extremely concrete political rewards." Graebner, *History's Place*, 130.

83. Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne*, 286.

84. For instance, Abdelkader Hadj Hamou's father was *cadi* (judge) of Miliana; Mohammed Ould Cheikh's father was *caid* (military chief) and *chevalier de la légion d'honneur*; Chukri Khodja belonged to a distinguished lineage—his grandfather was president of the tribunal de la Cour d'Appel d'Alger; M'Hamed Ben Rahal, the author of the first short story, was the son of an *agha* (higher in the administrative hierarchy than the *caid*); and Aïssa Zehar's father was a city councilman and landowner. According to Peter Dunwoodie, of the dozen known novels by francophone writers published between 1900 and 1948, six deal directly with the role of religion and the effects of conversion. Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing*, 131. Ahmed Lanasri says the same thing when he declares that the homogeneity of the corpus comes from the call for the preservation of Islamic principles. Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne*, 151.

85. Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne*, 142.

86. Pervillé, "Du berbérisme colonial."

87. Ibid.

88. Ferhat Abbas (1899–1985) studied pharmacy and became a town counselor. His political views evolved from assimilationist to nationalist. In 1943 he drafted the Manifesto of the Algerian People (Manifeste du peuple algérien) and became an important figure in the nationalist movement.

89. Pervillé, "Du berbérisme colonial."

90. On May 8, 1945, thousands of Algerians (indigenous) marched to celebrate the armistice and to voice their desire for independence in Sétif. Clashes with the French *gendarmerie* occurred, and forty demonstrators were killed by the police or the gendarmerie. In their retreat, some demonstrators attacked and killed twenty-one French settlers. In reprisal, thousands in Sétif and its region were slaughtered by the French authorities and militias. Ageron, "Mai 1945 en Algérie."

91. Mammeri, *Les isefra*, 186.

92. Ibid., 180.

93. Chaker, *Imazighen Ass-a*, 37.

94. Slimani-Dirèche, *Histoire de l'émigration kabyle*.

95. Ouerdane, *La question berbère*, 41.

96. Chaker, *Imazighen Ass-a*, 22.

97. Rachid Ali Yahia is a revolutionary who, to this day, supports an "Algerian Algeria." He came into the nationalist movement with early nationalist militants Si Ouali Bennaï and Ali Laïmèche, who created the first *maquis* (underground fighting) in Kabylia, a decade before the outbreak of the Algerian War.

98. Ouerdane, *La question berbère*, 74.

99. Aït Ahmed, *Mémoires d'un combattant*, 179. The objective of the OS

(Organisation Spéciale), a secret paramilitary outfit created in 1947, was to train officers and prepare the launching of the armed struggle.

100. Ibid., 180.

101. Aït Ahmed explains that the backlash against the Kabyles was so extreme that it led some Kabyles to become anti-Arab and anti-Muslim. While he assured his detractors of his unfailing loyalty to the nationalist struggle, stating that he preferred an Arab Algeria to a French Algeria, Aït Ahmed recounts having the feeling that some would rather have a French Algeria than a Berber Algeria. Aït Ahmed, *Mémoires d'un combattant*, 190.

102. The series of arrests of almost all the Kabyle executives is believed to be the result of an agreement between the party's leadership and the colonial authorities. Aït Ahmed, *Mémoires d'un combattant*, 181.

103. Aït Ahmed, *Mémoires d'un combattant*, 188.

104. The Berberist crisis in France provoked violent brawls in Paris and its suburbs and in other French cities as well, with many people injured. There was no comparable violence in Algeria.

105. Colonna, "Aux sources de la créativité," 132–33.

106. See Lazreg, *Eloquence of Silence*.

107. Ath-Messaoud and Gillette, *L'immigration algérienne en France*, 76.

108. Chaker, *Imazighen Ass-a*, 65.

109. See the informative article "Emile Masqueray en Kabylie" by Ouahmi Ould-Braham on Emile Masqueray and his struggle to establish schools in Kabylia.

110. Colonna, *Instituteurs algériens*, 108–9.

111. Ibid., 83, 72.

112. While many Kabyle records were already on the European market at the beginning of the twentieth century, the 1940s–'50s was a period in which several Kabyle singers became popular among immigrants. Slimane Azem especially enjoyed popularity in France, but there were also Zerrouki Allaoua, Arab Bouyezgarene, Farid Ali, Khadidja, Hnifa, Moh Said Ou Belaïd, and the celebrated Cheikh El Hasnaoui, Azem's elder.

113. Ihaddaden, "The Postcolonial Policy," 249.

Chapter 2. The First Berber Francophone Writers

1. Malek Bennabi, *Lebbeik, pèlerinage de pauvres*; Mohammed Kazi Tani, *La vie d'un aveugle*; Taieb Djemeri, *La course à l'étoile*; Kaddour M'hamsadji, *Le silence des cendres*; Tami Medjbeur, *Le fils du fellah;* Mohammed Arabdiou, *La pièce d'argent;* Zohra Drif, *La mort de mes frères;* Noureddine Meziane, *Un Algérien raconte;* Moussa Lachtar, *La guillotine*; Boualam Benaïssa Saïd, *Mon pays, la France.*

2. Oulhaci, *Marié*, *L'Équivoque*, and *Les Justiciables*.

3. Though actually an Arabic speaker, Kateb Yacine was forthcoming about his Berber background.

4. In the case of Assia Djebar, the acknowledgment of her Berber ancestry took place recently. See chapter 5. As for Malek Haddad, it would be interesting to read his work in light of his unacknowledged and undeclared Berber origins. Indeed, reading Malek Haddad's literary works through this absence would provide interesting insights into, say, his political claims. Haddad's oft-proclaimed grief over his "loss" of

the Arabic language and his claim that French was the language of his "exile" would surely have even more resonance if we were to take into account a third dimension in this linguistic dynamic. The unconscious loss of Berber language and culture might, in the end, be even more troubling than a conscious one, for clearly it is the ultimate and unmentionable lack.

5. Mammeri is known to come from a well-off family, but that affluence is relative, given that he remembered going to school barefoot in the snow for lack of money to buy shoes. Berrichi, *Mouloud Mammeri*, 12.

6. Mahfoufi, *Chants Kabyles*, 128.

7. Hanoteau was an engineer who arrived in Algeria as a captain in 1845. He participated with Bugeaud in expeditions against the Beni-Abbès in Kabylia in 1847, and the Beni-Aïcha and Kabylia in 1854 and 1856. He was the general of the brigade in 1870 and took an active role in the repression of the 1871 insurrection.

8. See Norris, "Barghawata and Their Berber Koran."

9. Chaker, "L'affirmation identitaire berbère," 21–22.

10. Basset, *Essai sur la littérature*, 97.

11. For instance, Le Fichier de documents berbères de Fort-National (Larbaa Nat Iraten, Kabylia) produced several dozen documents in Berber between 1947 and 1976, most of which were tales, proverbs, legends, and chronicles collected and translated by French authors. The French missionary Father Jean Marie Dallet researched and compiled the first reliable Kabyle dictionary, which is to this day an invaluable reference for scholars.

12. Feraoun, *L'anniversaire*, 55–56.

13. "C'est une littérature de l'indicible." (Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne*, 286).

14. "Choc civilisationnel" (Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne*, 151).

15. In reference to Jean Amrouche and Mouloud Feraoun, see Liauzu, "Disparition de deux hybrides culturels." See also Colonna, "Aux sources de la créativité," 132–33.

16. See Mouloud Feraoun's letter to Albert Camus, *L'anniversaire*, 35.

17. Lyons, "Ambiguous Narratives," 187.

18. Lyons, "Ethnographic Novel," 591.

19. Feraoun, *L'anniversaire*, 65.

20. Here the term Algerian refers to the indigenous or non-European population living in Algeria. As mentioned earlier, Djamila Debèche's *Leïla jeune fille d'Algérie* was published in 1947, the same year as *Jacinthe noire*; however, since Taos Amrouche's novel was completed after 1939, it is fair to say that she is indeed the first francophone Algerian woman writer.

21. F. Amrouche, *Histoire de ma vie*, 195.

22. F. Amrouche, *My Life Story*, 159.

23. In 1896 the Algerian poet Athman Ben Salah wrote poems to the glory of Islam and the Orient, but it is with Jean Amrouche that we find the first expression of an introspective and meditative voice. See Déjeux, *Maghreb littératures*, 85.

24. T. Yacine, *Chacal ou la ruse des dominés*.

25. Farès, "Evocation du poète," 21.

26. J. Amrouche, *Cendres*, 24.

27. Ibid., 42.

28. J. Amrouche, *Chants berbères de Kabylie*, 35–36.

29. Ibid., 36.

30. Amrouche died shortly after learning that Algeria was to become independent, a moment he greatly contributed to bringing forth. Intellectually and politically, Algeria's independence was a necessity. But how could the poet, who feels more intensely than anyone the "metaphysical exile," cripple himself further by relinquishing part of who he is?

31. J. Amrouche, *Un Algérien s'adresse*, LXV.

32. T. Yacine, *Chacal ou la ruse des dominés*, 205.

33. Héron, *Les écrivains à la radio*, 16.

34. Some writers came to dread Amrouche's radio show and refused to participate in his interviews, because, in addition to the format of the interview (oral, improvised, and personal), Amrouche proved to be a redoubtable critic. After Amrouche invited Marcel Jouhandeau several times, the writer replied, "Je croyais que vous aviez renoncé à me couper en morceaux?" (I thought you had given up cutting me into pieces?) Héron, *Les écrivains à la radio*, 32.

35. J. Amrouche, *Chants berbères de Kabylie*, 25.

36. Preface by Mouloud Mammeri to Jean Amrouche's *Chants berbères de Kabylie*.

37. J. Amrouche, *Chants berbères de Kabylie*, 63.

38. Lejeune, *Je est un autre*, 103–60.

39. Héron, *Les écrivains à la radio*, 15–16.

40. Cited in Dugas, "Genèse des entretiens," 28.

41. Ibid., 30.

42. Ibid., 32.

43. On December 18, 2010, the Berber Cultural Association (ACB) in France organized a colloquium on Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche where writer and psychoanalyst Nabile Farès gave a presentation on the novel that Amrouche was unable to write, a presentation pertinently titled "Le livre qui manque" (The missing book).

44. Cited in Chikhi, *Littérature algérienne*, 26–27.

45. See Dugas, "Genèse des entretiens," 32.

46. See Les amis des archives de la ville de Marseille, *Jean Amrouche*, 206.

47. J. Amrouche, "L'éternel Jugurtha."

48. Chikhi, *Littérature algérienne*, 31.

49. Les amis des Archives de la ville de Marseille, *Jean Amrouche*, 128.

50. Ibid., 21.

51. J. Amrouche, "L'éternel Jugurtha," 375, 380.

52. Héron, *Les écrivains à la radio*, 28.

53. Memmi, *La statue de sel*, 241.

54. Héron, *Les écrivains à la radio*, 27.

55. Memmi, *La statue de sel*, 237.

56. Héron, *Les écrivains à la radio*, 28.

57. T. Yacine, *Chacal ou la ruse des dominés*, 205.

58. T. Amrouche, *Jacinthe noire*, 9.

59. Gadant, "La permission de dire 'je,'" 93.

60. Mohamed Kacimi-El Hassani declares that writing in French enabled him to say "I" without having to add the traditional formula "Que Dieu me préserve d'un

pareil pronom, car il est l'attribut du Diable" (May God protect me from such a pronoun for it is the attribute of the Devil). Kacimi-El Hassani, "La maison de l'être," 141.

61. As Jean Déjeux explains, in North African societies, traditionally the individual distinguishing himself or herself is not tolerated, because the person gives the impression of breaking free from the group. Déjeux, *La littérature féminine*, 64–66.

62. Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, 15.

63. T. Amrouche, *Rue des tambourins*, 7.

64. Ibid., 76.

65. Ibid., 100.

66. Ibid., 105.

67. Ibid., 263.

68. Ibid., 300.

69. T. Amrouche, *Solitude ma mère*, 227.

70. French writer Jean Giono, Taos Amrouche's close friend, opposed the publication of *L'amant imaginaire*, an autobiographical novel in which he appears under the name Marcel Arrens. The novel is written in the form of a diary recounting the life of Amena, a Berber singer who lives with Olivier and their daughter, Isabelle; it explores the existential difficulties triggered by her tormented love affair with a notorious French writer named Marcel Arrens. The novel was finally published in 1975, ten years after it was written. *Rue des tambourins* also encountered similar difficulties. In addition, Taos Amrouche's brother Jean was not keen on her writing ambitions. According to Laurence Bourdil, Taos Amrouche's daughter, Jean prevented the publication of *Jacinthe noire*. See Bourdil, "Ma mère est un être surgi des siècles." One of the first extensive studies on Taos Amrouche is Brahimi, *Taos Amrouche, Romancière*.

71. For a more substantial discussion of Taos Amrouche's double career, see Aïtel, "Taos Amrouche."

72. T. Amrouche, *L'amant imaginaire*, 259.

73. The publication of *Le fils du pauvre* is usually accepted as the text that inaugurates the 52 Generation, which was supported by writers such as Emmanuel Roblès and Albert Camus and included Mouloud Mammeri, Mohammed Dib, and Kateb Yacine (as well as Moroccan writers Driss Chraïbi and A. Sefrioui). Khatibi even declared these writers to be the first crop of valid Algerian novelists. Khatibi, *Le roman maghrébin*, 36.

74. See Adam, "Les débuts littéraires de Mouloud Feraoun," 950.

75. Ibid., 947. Indeed, for generations of Kabyles, Feraoun afforded them access to the world. Hend Sadi expressed feeling a sense of wonder when he first read Feraoun's *Le fils du pauvre* and discovered that the Kabyles and their particular world were worthy of appearing in a printed book. He writes, "I was infinitely grateful to Feraoun. I read and reread Feraoun and settled in the quiet certainty man reaches when he is finally recognized." ("Quelle merveille fut cette découverte! Ainsi nos modestes maisons, nos ikoufans, nous-mêmes, avions droit de cité dans les livres imprimés, sans maquillage, ni masques. Nous étions, nous aussi dignes d'attention. J'en conçus pour Feraoun une reconnaissance infinie. Je lus et relus Feraoun et m'installai dans de tranquilles certitudes auxquelles accède l'homme enfin reconnu.") Sadi, "Un beau et douloureux printemps," 12.

76. Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 9.

77. See Achour, "Le texte féraounien," 84.

78. Speaking of want and hunger in Algerian literature, critics have often exclusively focused on Mohammed Dib's novel *La grande maison*. However, Feraoun's treatment of hunger in *Le fils du pauvre* is particularly moving in that it is both realistic and philosophical.

79. Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 10.

80. Ibid., 12.

81. In *L'anniversaire*, Mouloud Feraoun explains the flourishing of Algerian literature written in French through the need to testify, in order to dissipate misunderstandings and to withdraw from peaceful consciences the excuse of ignorance. Feraoun, *L'anniversaire*, 56.

82. Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 10.

83. Ibid.

84. Montaigne, *Montaigne's Essays and Selected Writings*, 280.

85. Ibid., 281.

86. Pascal, *Pensées*, sec. II, 251–52.

87. Achour, "Le texte féraounien"; Merolla, *De l'art de la narration Tamazight*; and Liauzu, "Disparition de deux hybrides culturels."

88. Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 105.

89. Ibid., 126.

90. Ibid., 135.

91. Khadda, "L'allégorie de la féminité," 86.

92. Feraoun, *Le fils du pauvre*, 102.

93. Feraoun, *Lettres* à *ses amis*, 61.

94. Letter to Albert Camus in Feraoun, *L'anniversaire*, 39.

95. Mammeri was enlisted in the first RTA (Régiment de Tirailleurs Algériens) and participated in the Italy and Alsace campaigns. See Berrichi, *Mouloud Mammeri*, 12.

96. See T. Yacine, "Mouloud Mammeri dans la guerre." In this special issue of *Awal* on Mouloud Mammeri, there is a section dedicated to the role he played in the Algerian War.

97. T. Yacine, "Une vocation en sommeil," 6.

98. Mammeri, "La société berbère, I," "La société berbère, II," and "La société berbère, III."

99. Mammeri, "L'évolution de la poésie kabyle."

100. Mammeri, *La colline oubliée*, 219–20.

101. For the French press, the success of the novel illustrates the accomplishment of an indigenous writer educated in the French school; for other commentators, the very fact that the novel was published and received good reviews in the French press was suspect. For Mostefa Lacheraf, the fact that the narrative is circumscribed to the region of Kabylia is unacceptable. It jeopardizes the unity of the country and plays the game of the colonial regime. As for the author's demonstration of love for Kabylia, it is construed as a negation of Arab identity and a means to encourage division. Another critic, Mohamed Cherif Sahli, states that a writer should always write in the language of his country, and his use of a foreign language can be justified only if the project has an evident national interest. See Sahli, "La colline du reniement," and Lacheraf, "La colline oubliée ou les consciences anachroniques."

102. Mammeri, *Le sommeil du juste*, 8–9.

103. Ibid., 17.

104. Ibid., 14.

105. Ibid., 16.

106. Ibid., 21–22.

107. Ibid., 24.

108. Ibid., 30.

109. Ibid., 132.

110. Ibid., 134.

111. Ibid., 135.

112. Ibid., 237–38.

113. Ouary, *Poèmes et chants de Kabylie*; Ouary, *La montagne aux chacals*; and Ouary, *La robe kabyle de Baya*.

114. Ouary, *Le grain dans la meule*, 11–12.

115. Ibid., 20.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid., 21.

118. Ibid., 35.

119. Quoted in Lamriben, "Malek Ouary, le chantre du terroir."

120. Bourdieu, "L'odyssée de la réappropriation," 5.

121. He returned to writing later in life, and Ouary's last two novels confirm his talent as a full-fledged writer.

122. Quoted in Arab, "National Liberation War," 34.

123. In the press of the time, he was condemned for his supposed passivity and nonviolent position and ridiculed for writing his journal "while his compatriots were making the revolution." Maschino, "Les chemins qui montent ou le roman." Abdelkebir Khatibi declared in 1968 that Feraoun was a bit late in joining the nationalist cause. See Khatibi, *Le roman maghrébin*, 49.

124. Samira Sayeh writes, "Cet 'auteur musulman' que j'appréhende désormais comme un auteur régional français prônant l'amour de sa petite patrie, a participé à l'expression d'une identité culturelle, provinciale française d'outre-mer à l'époque coloniale." (This "Muslim author," whom I now consider a French regionalist writer, who promotes his little motherland, has participated in the expression of a French provincial cultural identity overseas during the colonial period.) Sayeh, "Des départements français," 214.

125. In a letter addressed to Jean, dated February 9, 1956, Pierre, Madeleine, and Denise Molbert write, "À partir de ce jour, nous considérons que vous ne faites plus partie de notre famille. Recevez, Monsieur, l'expression de notre profond mépris." (We consider that from now on, you are not part of our family anymore. Rest assured of our deepest contempt.) Amrouche, *Journal 1928–1962*, 299.

126. Belkacem, "Les donneurs de leçons."

127. Lamriben, "Malek Ouary, le chantre du terroir."

128. Lamriben, "Évocation Marguerite-Taos Amrouche."

129. T. Yacine, *Chacal ou la ruse des dominés*, 10.

130. Ibid., 16.

131. Ibid., 14–15.
132. Ibid., 14.

Chapter 3. Of Berbers and Beurs, France and Algeria

Part of this chapter was first published in Aïtel, "Between Algeria and France."

1. Mahé, *Histoire de la Grande Kabylie*, 473.

2. See chapter 1.

3. On September 29, 1963, Aït Ahmed made a declaration to journalists, clearly stating that it was not the territory (Kabylia) that was in rebellion but a segment of the Algerian population taking back the revolutionary movement broken by the crisis in the summer of 1962. Ouerdane, *La question berbère*, 137.

4. The army was sent to Kabylia allegedly to quash a secessionist plot. Several hundred people were killed or wounded. Leaders of the rebellion were imprisoned. Former Berber militant Hend Sadi remembers the brutality of the ANP (Popular National Army) when it settled into the schools and barracks recently abandoned by the French army. The Algerian army was perceived as an occupation force. See Sadi, "Témoignage d'un ancien militant," 23.

5. A specific form of Islam has always been practiced in North Africa, due in part to the worship of local saints. See Dermenghem, *Le culte des saints*. Moreover, one expert on Islam, Louis Gardet, even uses the expression "l'Islam berbère" (Berber Islam) to refer to the particularities of North African Islam that distinguish it from Islam practiced elsewhere. Gardet, *L'Islam.*

6. See Grandguillaume, "Arabisation et légitimité politique en Algérie."

7. K. Yacine, "Les ancêtres redoublent de férocité," 8.

8. Grandguillaume, "Arabisation et légitimité politique en Algérie," 21.

9. Sadi, "Témoignage d'un ancien militant du mouvement berbère," 23.

10. Gandon, "Arabisation et symbole collectif en Algérie."

11. Ibid., 16.

12. Ibid., 18.

13. People were arrested and put in prison simply because they owned documents (e.g., pamphlets) written in Berber or because they wore T-shirts with Tifinagh letters on them. See the testimony of Mohand-Ouamer Oussalem in M. Salhi, *Algérie citoyenneté et identité*, 105.

14. Bessaoud, *De petites gens pour une grande cause*, 139.

15. See Bessaoud, *De petites gens pour une grande cause*, 141–42. After this game, the regime decided to rename the JSK, which decidedly carried the cultural and linguistic claims of the Berber youth shouting "Je suis Kabyle" (I am Kabyle) in the stadiums. The team was renamed JET (Jeunesse Électronique de Tizi-Ouzou).

16. Before these events, Kabyles did not use the word Imazighen to refer to themselves.

17. "On n'arabise que ce qui n'est pas arabe," the quotation that heads this section, is a well-known statement by Mohand-Aarav Bessaoud.

18. Lieutenant Abdelkader Rahmani was among the fifty-two Algerian officers in the French army who in 1957 were involved in "l'affaire des officiers algériens" (the Algerian officers' affair). The officers addressed a letter to the French president, René

Coty, stating that they refused to participate in the war and instead offered their services to find a political solution to the Algerian conflict. It ended Lieutenant Rahmani's military career.

19. The Algerian immigrant community in France was monitored by the Amicale des Algériens en Europe, a satellite of the FLN in France. The name change took place in 1966. See Bessaoud, *De petites gens pour une grande cause*, 28.

20. Bessaoud remarks that when he arrived in France, he realized how the Kabyle immigrant population was reluctant to claim any Berber specificity for fear of being called traitors or associated with French missionaries. Bessaoud decided that before any political action, some grassroots groundwork had to be done to reverse the effect that the FLN discourse and Nasserism had had on the Kabyle population. Bessaoud, *De petites gens pour une grande cause*, 18–19.

21. Opposition came from different Algerian political parties and from the Amicale; to prevent people from becoming members or attending the association's activities, the Amicale accused the association of being a creation of Israel or linked to missionaries. See Bessaoud, *De petites gens pour une grande cause*, 29.

22. Renting a space was made difficult by several organizations linked to the Algerian government; the singers were threatened with passport confiscation; the Amicale accused the participants of singing for Israel and destroyed more than a thousand flyers announcing the concert. Finally, on the day of the event, members of the Amicale waited for people outside subway stations to dissuade them from attending the event. See Bessaoud, *De petites gens pour une grande cause*, 67–68; and Sadi, "Mohand-Aarav Bessaoud."

23. The bulletin's pan-Berberist vision provided it with an audience outside of France and Algeria: in Morocco, Libya, and as far as the Touareg countries of Mali and Niger. Salem Ould Slimane, former militant of the Berber Academy, remembers Libyan Berbers and Tunisian Berbers coming to the Academy's headquarters in Paris. Ould Slimane, "Bessaoud rêvait d'une nation berbère."

24. Bessaoud had opted for the Tifinagh alphabet, as opposed to the Latin alphabet championed by writers Mouloud Mammeri and Mohia along with other major cultural figures. The Berber Academy actually introduced the circulation of the Tifinagh alphabet, which came to embody Berber history and identity. The letter Z (for Imazighen, meaning free human beings), shaped like a double fork, became the symbol of the Berbers throughout North Africa.

25. M. Salhi, *Algérie citoyenneté et identité*, 88.

26. At the University of Paris VIII, reforms were under way and autonomous working groups (*groupes autonomes de travail*) were constituted. Concerning the teaching of North African history, the Maghreb group split into two hostile groups: one defended pan-Arabism and denied the Berber identity by characterizing it as a creation of colonialism; the other constituted itself into the GEB (Groupe d'Etudes Berbères). Ouerdane, *La question berbère*, 185.

27. See the document cited by Galand-Pernet in "Mohia 1970," 17.

28. Chaker, *Imazighen Ass-a*, 25.

29. In the 1970s the academic world (in linguistics, anthropology, prehistory, literature, etc.) strengthened and developed its work on Berber studies through several academic research centers in France and elsewhere in Europe. A journal, *Littérature*

orale arabo-berbère (under the direction of anthropologist Germaine Tillion and, later, ethnologist Camille Lacoste), was started, and the first volumes of the *Berber Encyclopedia* (founded by prehistorian Gabriel Camps) were under way. There were also the works of linguist Paulette Galand-Pernet and Camille Lacoste-Dujardin, whose "*Le conte kabyle,* étude éthnologique" (1970) resonated strongly with Berber militants. Other influential works are those of Jean Servier (ethnology), Fanny Colonna (sociology), Jean Déjeux (literature), and Ernest Gellner and David Hart (anthropology). For more details about this period, see Merolla, *De l'art de la narration Tamazight*, ch. 3.

30. Mammeri had published *La colline oubliée* (1952), *Le sommeil du juste* (1955), *L'opium et le bâton* (1965), several short stories, a play, and several articles on Berber society and anthropology.

31. Ouerdane, *La question berbère*, 185.

32. Ibid., 186.

33. M. Salhi, *Algérie citoyenneté et identité*, 83.

34. Ibid.

35. See chapter 2.

36. Although she was born in Tunisia, Taos Amrouche always asserted her direct kinship with and link to Kabyle culture.

37. Taos Amrouche had her shows on the RTF, the French national public broadcasting company, renamed the ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française) in the 1960s. There was a state monopoly on the radio in France until 1981. After the end of the Second World War, the RTF strengthened and developed the activities of its Arab section, EMLAB (émissions musulmanes en langue arabe et berbère), which later became the ELAB (émission en langue arabe et berbère*).* From the end of the Second World War through the 1950s, the heads of this section all came from Muslim Military Affairs (affaires militaires musulmanes). See Mahfoufi, *Chants Kabyles*, 53.

38. There were already a few programs in the Kabyle language in the early 1940s.

39. Abrous, "La chaîne kabyle à la radio-télévision algérienne," 98.

40. Interview with Malek Ouary at the Algerian radio station La chaîne 2 on October 23, 2001.

41. Ouary collected oral literature and did numerous investigative reports in Kabylia and France. His published works include *Par les chemins de l'émigration* (1955) and *Poèmes et chants de Kabylie* (1972).

42. Bali, "Emission enfantine de la radio nationale," 26.

43. Ibid., 23.

44. Censorship especially. Ferhat, "La chanson kabyle depuis dix ans," 65.

45. In 1976 the National Charter (La charte nationale) defined Algeria as an Arab and Islamic state and called for an intensive campaign of Arabization. In this charter, linguistic diversity was totally ignored. However, the call to close down the Kabyle radio station went back to the 1940s, when the Oulémas (religious movement) requested that the station be shut down. In 1948 a declaration in the movement's newspaper *El-Baçaïr* stated that Kabyles would be considered full Algerians when they ceased to "mumble this gibberish that hurts our ears" ("chuchoter ce jargon [la langue kabyle] qui nous écorche les oreilles"). Aït Ahmed, "Interview," 47.

46. Ihaddaden, "The Postcolonial Policy of Algerian Broadcasting," 252.

47. Oussalem's testimony. M. Salhi, *Algérie citoyenneté et identité*, 84.

48. Ibid., 82.

49. Though there are of course other influential artists of this period, such as Aït Menguellet, Ferhat Mehenni, Djamel Allam, and Matoub Lounès.

50. Goodman, "Writing Empire, Underwriting Nation," 102. For the full demonstration and argumentation, see her article "From Village to Vinyl."

51. M. Salhi, *Algérie citoyenneté et identité*, 67.

52. Yacine's play was really about immigration. *Mohammed prends ta valise* is a comedy that denounces the conditions of immigrant life in France, but based on its title, some religious fundamentalists believed that it was a blasphemous play in which the prophet Mohammed was asked to pack his suitcase and leave.

53. The theater company was able to keep secret the language in which it was about to perform until taking the stage. See Sadi, "Témoignage d'un ancien militant," 26.

54. See Salem Chaker's testimony in Aït-Larbi, *Avril 80*.

55. Guenoun, *Chronologie du mouvement berbère*, 50.

56. Ibid., 55.

57. The Berber Cultural Movement (MCB) was born out of the spring events. During the Berber Spring, many committees were set up, and the coordination among them was effectively organized. These committees played an important role in the organization of events and in the birth of the MCB.

58. Among the different propositions outlined in this document are the democratization of education, the freedom of cultural expression, the promotion of the usage and teaching of Berber and Algerian Arabic, the recognition of both these languages as national languages of Algeria, and the freedom of the press (to allow journalists to do their job and inform objectively without any censorship). Guenoun, *Chronologie du mouvement berbère*, 55–56.

59. The revolt of 1963 was an armed rebellion.

60. Stora, "Figures Kabyles dans l'histoire politique algérienne," 47.

61. On foreign agitators, see, for example, the articles in French newspapers titled "Kabylie: Alger accuse Paris" (*Le Figaro*, April 25, 1980) and "Kabylie: Alger brandit la thèse du complot" (*Libération*, April 26, 1980). On "reactionary elements," see *L'Humanité*, "Fermeture provisoire de l'université" (April 22, 1980).

62. The call for the first general strike in Kabylia since the independence, on April 16, 1980, was an immense success. Besides the recognition of the Kabyle language and culture, the tract called for popular Arabic and Berber to become national languages in Algeria and denounced the shortages of basic goods, the lack of housing, the corruption, the press' lies, and rigged elections. See document reprinted in *Actualités et Culture Berbères*, nos. 64–65 (Spring–Summer 2010): 9.

63. Quoted in M. Salhi, *Algérie citoyenneté et identité*, 124.

64. Stora, "Figures Kabyles dans l'histoire politique algérienne," 47.

65. M. Salhi, *Algérie citoyenneté et identité*, 141.

66. On April 7, 1980, a simultaneous march was held in Algiers and Paris. The French newspaper *Libération* published an article titled "Manifestations parallèles pour l'identité kabyle en France et en Algérie. Paris-Alger: les Berbères sont dans la capitale" (Simultaneous marches for Kabyle identity in France and Algeria.

Paris-Algiers: the Berbers are in the capital). Another march in Paris on April 28 was canceled at the last minute. Still, a thousand people showed up in Paris, and several hundred were arrested and were recorded in police files. See "Un millier de personnes au rassemblement kabyle, malgré son annulation. 200 kabyles interpellés et fichés à Paris" (One thousand people at the Kabyle gathering despite its cancellation. 200 Kabyles stopped and put on file in Paris), *Libération*, April 29, 1980.

67. Salem Chaker comments that until 1980, Amnesty International, for example, knew of only one political prisoner in Algeria (Ahmed Ben Bella), though in fact thousands had been arbitrarily arrested and tortured between 1962 and 1980. See Salem Chaker's testimony in Aït-Larbi, *Avril 80*. See also "The Press and Human Rights" in Goodman, *Berber Culture on the World Stage*, 45–46.

68. For a discussion of the word "Beur," see Laronde, *Autour du roman beur*, 51–55; and Sylvie Durmelat, "Petite histoire du mot beur," 191–207.

69. See Bouamama, *Dix ans de marche des Beurs*.

70. A well-known case is that of policeman Jean-Paul Taillefer, who killed seventeen-year-old Lahouari Ben Mohamed on October 18, 1980, and was sentenced to ten months in prison (and four on probation). The murderers often pleaded guilty to receive lesser sentences or were acquitted on the basis of "legitimate defense." Aïchoune, *La Beur génération*.

71. Bouamama, *Dix ans de marche des Beurs*, 56.

72. One of the agendas was that the march should be a response to the rise of the extreme right-wing party the National Front and a reassertion of leftist values. The claims of the youth regarding the police and the justice system are therefore overlooked.

73. Bouamama cites a Parisian tract to support the march that declares, "The goal of the march is to state the existence in France of a large segment of the population which wants to live in peace and justice with communities of different origins, for the happiness of all." Bouamama, *Dix ans de marche des Beurs*, 58.

74. Ibid., 60.

75. Rouadjia, *Les enfants illégitimes*, 19.

76. See Bouamama's discussion on the creation of two associations: France Plus and SOS Racisme. Bouamama, *Dix ans de marche des Beurs*, 118–44.

77. This differed from earlier presses, whose focus was on issues that pertained to the immigrants' home countries. In the early 1970s, the press started to include topics on immigrants' issues, such as hunger strikes by undocumented immigrants and rent strikes. See El Yazami, "Du 'fedayin' au 'beur.'"

78. El Yazami, "France's Ethnic Minority Press," 124.

79. After this last item, the magazine adds the following comment: "Shouldn't we help the society we live in discover the cultures and realities of these countries?"—thereby underlining that this aspect of the magazine was not directed toward maintaining connections with the countries of origin—which could be frowned upon—but, rather, providing an opportunity for the French to learn about North African cultures.

80. Along with power struggles within the radio's board of directors, ethnic origin (Arab and Berber) was an important factor in the inner dissent that brought about the

demise of the radio station ten years later. Debate over programs in Berber and Arabic was part of these disagreements, in which the audience participated. Derderian, "Broadcasting from the Margins," 104–5.

81. Abdallah, "IM'média, l'immigration par elle-même."

82. The name Rock Against Police comes from the British campaign called Rock Against Racism in the 1970s. However, unlike the British experience, the youth behind Rock Against Police wanted their concerts to take place in the locations where police assaulted the youth. They preferred to be called Rock Against Police rather than "against racism" because "everybody claims to be anti-racist." Bouamama, *Dix ans de marche des Beurs*, 36.

83. Abdallah, *J'y suis, J'y reste!*.

84. Later developments will change that. For example, the protest movement Les indigènes de la République created in 2005 focuses its attention on France's colonial history and its repercussions in today's France.

85. Sebbar, *Parle mon fils parle à ta mère*, 27–28.

86. This is well illustrated in Yamina Benguigui's documentary *Mémoires d'immigrés* (1997). The last part of the documentary is devoted to interviews with the children of immigrants. Several speak of the idea of returning to the home country that was inculcated in them at an early age, often preventing them from imagining an adult life in France.

87. The café plays the role of a welcome center, post office, unemployment office, and a place to discuss politics, meet with family and friends, listen to music from the home country, write letters, drink, play games, and eat. See Zehraoui, *L'immigration de l'homme*, 25.

88. Ibid., 55.

89. Ibid, 60.

90. An interesting case is that of the children of Abdelkader Rahmani (one of the founders of the Berber Academy in France), who ignored all information about their father's past. Historian Hélène Bracco laments buried memories due to the silence of the authorities, but also tackles people's buried memories. She recounts her meeting with Abdelkader Rahmani's children, who ignored their father's secret mission and even ignored his refusal to go to war until one of them found a box of documents at her mother's. It was a friend who gave the oldest daughter, who was already an adult, the book written by her father (imprisoned in 1959), wherein she discovered his action. It was during her father's interview with the historian that the third daughter learned about her father's story. Moreover, Rahmani's children ignored the consequences of his refusal to fight (prison, exile, disgrace) until Bracco told them. The children confessed that they were waiting for the historian's book to come out to know more about their father. Bracco, "Mémoires de la guerre d'Algérie."

91. Regarding family structures, for example, some families live with members of the extended family from the parents' home country, some live with a French parent or with siblings from different marriages, and some live with stepparents. These different family structures influence the daily life of the household, its cultural references, and even its attitude toward religion. Regarding home countries, for example, some Beurs were born in Algeria, others grew up in the home country before coming

to France at a later age, others were born in France but would visit their parents' home country occasionally or every year, while others never left France.

92. Chaker, *Imazighen Ass-a*, 38.

93. See chapters 1 and 2.

94. In a footnote to a discussion on the origin of the word Beur, Alec G. Hargreaves states: "A number of commentators have suggested that rather than being a piece of verlan, 'Beur' may be a contraction of 'Berbères d'Europe': see, for example, Jean Déjeux, 'Romanciers de l'immigration maghrébine en France,' *Francofonia*, vol. 5, no. 8, Spring 1985, p. 103 n. 44; Hédi Bouraoui, "A New Trend in Maghrebian Culture: the Beurs and their Generation," *Maghreb Review*, vol. 13, nos. 3–4, 1988, p. 219. There is, however, no evidence to support this view from within the immigrant community itself." Hargreaves, *Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction*, 30.

95. Ibid., 9–16.

96. See in the introduction the discussion of Mouloud Feraoun's use of the word *Arabe*.

97. See Bouzid's novel *La Marche*, whose main subject was the march.

98. The figure of the father in this novel is clearly inspired by the writer's own father, who is Kabyle. Like most Kabyles, he is Muslim. In the novel, the father can read and write verses from the Koran. However, his Kabyle origin has often been ignored by academics, who just assumed that the father is Arab. Farida Belghoul herself does not highlight or even mention this origin. On the Kabyle origin of Belghoul's father, see Déjeux, *La littérature féminine*, 219, and "Toujours en marche," *Libération*, June 28–29 (2008), 40.

99. Belghoul, *Georgette!*, 17–18.

100. Ibid., 35.

101. Ibid., 34–35.

102. Ibid., 35.

103. Ibid., 9.

104. Ibid., 163.

105. For several years, Tassadit Imache was on the board of the national committee of the deontology of security, which concerned cases of police violence, abuses in prison, and deportation by border police. She expressed herself on these issues several times in the press and wrote an article in *Le monde diplomatique* in November 2008 vehemently denouncing the inhumane deportation procedures that were taking place aboard French planes.

106. Imache participated in an interesting volume edited by Leïla Sebbar titled *Mon père*. It is a collection of stories by thirty-one women about their fathers.

107. Imache, *Une fille sans histoire*, 117.

108. Ibid., 127–28.

109. Tadjer, *Les ANI du "Tassili,"* 41.

110. Ibid., 27.

111. Ibid., 42.

112. Ibid., 62.

113. Ibid., 174.

114. It is interesting to note that Sakinna claims her "Arabness," which is here both the umbrella term all Beurs use to refer to themselves and, in this instance, terms

that point to a blind spot. Never will the protagonist associate herself with Berbers at a personal level. On Boukhedenna's Kabyle origin, see Hargreaves, *La littérature beur*, 16.

115. Boukhedenna, *Journal "Nationalité,"* 68.

116. Ibid., 75.

117. Ibid., 83.

118. Ibid., 126.

119. Ibid., 107.

120. Once in Algeria, Sakinna learns about the Berbers and their plight. She associates with their fight for freedom at the political level, but not personally. Boukhedenna, *Journal "Nationalité,"* 96.

121. Déjeux, *La littérature féminine*, 32.

122. Kessas, *Beur's Story*, 44.

123. Ibid., 47.

124. Tadjer, *Le porteur de cartable*, 181.

125. Kettane, *Le sourire de Brahim*, 86.

126. Ibid., 87.

127. Ibid., 103.

128. Ibid., 106.

129. Ibid., 114.

130. Brahim in Nacer Kettane's novel actually discovers the riches of his Berber culture when he is about to take his *baccalauréat*: his cousin takes him to hear Taos Amrouche sing and shares his important library with Brahim, who starts reading the classics (Feraoun, Mammeri, Ibn Khaldun, and Kateb). In the other novels, there is also a turning point, usually during the late teen years, when the characters become interested in their parents' past and culture. There is not, however, any literary influence of their Algerian counterparts in the Beur authors' narratives.

131. Silverstein, *Algeria in France*, 193.

132. This shortcoming appears at other moments in Silverstein's book, whose main argument is that Berberism and Islamism are two sides of the same coin, which at the least is very schematic. One should recall Raymond Williams' famous declaration in *Culture and Society* that there are no masses, only ways of seeing people as masses.

133. Djaout and Mbaye, "Black 'Beur' Writing," 220.

134. Tadjer, *Alphonse*, 23.

135. McKinney, "*Le jeu de piste*."

136. A good example of these new voices is Sabri Louatah, whose novels *Les sauvages* (2011) and *Les sauvages 2* (2012) explore the bustling life of a family of Kabyle origin living in Saint Etienne, France.

137. Hargreaves, "Stratégies de désappartenance chez Akli Tadjer."

138. As mentioned earlier, this aspect of the Beur claim, probably better formulated as the right to difference, has been dismissed by the newly created associations.

139. A significant example of this reconnection can be found in the special issue of *Sans Frontière* dedicated to the Berber Spring (*Sans Frontière*, no. 13, May 6, 1980).

140. Benbrahim, "La poésie orale kabyle de résistance."

141. Mahfoufi, *Chants Kabyles*, 5 and 35.

142. Ibid., 49–51.

143. In 1975 it was also the first Algerian song to be aired on the French national radio France-Inter. See Goodman, "From Village to Vinyl," 86.

144. See the term "Beur" in Hughes and Reader, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary French Culture*.

145. To the artists already mentioned, we could add Ferhat (in the band Imazighen Imula, "free people of the north"), Malika Domrane, Sofiane, the bands Inemlayen, Igoudar (sparrow hawk), Agraw ("gathering," where young Takfarinas played), Yougourthen, and the celebrated poet Aït Menguellet, among others.

Chapter 4. Rebels in Print and Song

1. The first epigraph, by Tahar Djaout, refers to the passing of Algerian poet and artist Bachir Hadj Ali and Mohamed Khadda. Djaout, "Frères pour l'éternité." The second epigraph is from Wole Soyinka's foreword, "A Voice that Would Not Be Silenced," in Djaout, *Last Summer of Reason*.

2. BBC, *Shooting the Writer*.

3. For example, in a discussion on Algerian writer Ahlam Mustaghanami's *Memory in the Flesh*, Elizabeth Holt declares that "writing in Arabic marks a break with French colonialism that for all their pulverizing of the French language, French-language writings such as Kateb Yacine's . . . cannot enact on an emblematic level. Arabic serves to connect Algeria with an Arab past, present and future." Holt, "'In a Language That Was Not His Own,'" 129.

4. In a span of three years (1993–96), more than fifty journalists were killed in Algeria by armed men linked to Islamic groups. The results of investigations have not been made public. To this day, the assassination of Djaout, like that of most of the others, remains unsolved.

5. In Algeria, major information agencies are controlled by the government, such as the newspaper *El Moudjahid* and the ENTV (Algerian television), often referred to as "L'Unique." Until 1998 the ENTV was the only TV channel available in Algeria. There is also a state-run press, the SNED (Société Nationale d'Edition et de Diffusion) and its successor, the ENL (Entreprise Nationale du Livre). Eric Sellin writes, "From the outset, SNED's publications reflected the ideological and patriotic stance of the FLN" and until relatively recently, SNED "was conservative, puritanical, and inhospitable to experimentation." Sellin, "Literary Expression and the State," 429.

6. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 26.

7. "L'Eden n'est ni de l'ordre de l'utopie, ni de l'espace, ni du spirituel mais il est de l'ordre du temps. L'Eden, c'est l'enfance." (Eden is not about utopia, space or spirituality, it is about time. Eden is childhood.) Djaout, "Littérature," 28.

8. Naït Messaoud, "Tahar Djaout."

9. Djaout, "Lettre de l'éditeur."

10. "De semaine en semaine l'Algérie a rendez-vous avec elle-même, apprend à se connaitre, regagne sur un passé proche ignoré, s'ouvre à la vivante pluralité de son présent." (Week after week, Algeria had an appointment with itself. It learned to know itself, caught up on its ignored close past, and opened itself to the living plurality of its present.) Bernard, "L'invention du regard Tahar Djaout," 226.

11. Djaout, "Lettre à Da Lmulud."

12. "Enfant déjà je rêvais de réinventer le monde" (as a child I was already dreaming of reinventing the world). Djaout, "Littérature," 23.

13. Ibid., 24.

14. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 88, 89.

15. Sénac always signed his poems with a sun. Two films dedicated to the assassinated poet refer to this: *Jean Sénac, Le forgeron du soleil*, directed by Ali Akika (2003) and *Le soleil assassiné*, directed by Abdelkrim Bahloul (2004).

16. "Dès l'origine la parole a pour lui vocation de . . . briser le cercle des cauchemars et d'annoncer en ses incantations d'autant plus tendres le nouveau visage de l'homme solaire à inventer" (From the beginning, the word has for him the vocation of . . . breaking the circle of nightmares and announcing in tender invocations the new face of the solar man to be invented). Bernard, "L'invention du regard Tahar Djaout," 226.

17. Djaout, "Littérature," 28.

18. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 27.

19. Ibid., 122–23.

20. Ibid., 123.

21. Djaout, "Frères pour l'éternité."

22. The Almoravid dynasty (1062–1150) reigned over parts of the Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, and Islamic Spain. The Almoravids founded Marrakech as their capital city. Djaout recounts the failed battle to take Marrakech led by Ibn Toumert, the Mahdi (the guided one) of the Almohads, and how he died before accomplishing his mission. Still, the Mahdi was ultimately successful, for his successor, Abd al-Mu'min, would conquer Fès and Marrakech and put an end to the Almoravid reign.

23. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 57.

24. Ibid., 31.

25. Ibid., 104, 107.

26. Bensmaïa, *Experimental Nations*, 73.

27. Ibid., 75.

28. For an excellent discussion on this question and a response to Bensmaïa's approach, see Vallury, "Walking the Tightrope between Memory and History."

29. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 103.

30. Ibid., 103–4.

31. Ibid., 75.

32. Ibid., 65.

33. Ibid., 68.

34. Ibid., 94.

35. In a short review of a film on Kateb Yacine, Djaout expresses his deep admiration for the writer, who introduced the "plural myth" (*le mythe pluriel*) in North African fiction. It is the first time, declares Djaout, that the expression of the interior fractures the syntax and blows away this "*indigénisme*" that underlies even the best novels of the 1950s: "Pour la première fois dans la littérature maghrébine, l'expression de l'intérieur fracture la syntaxe qui la porte et fait éclater du même coup cet 'indigénisme' qui sous-tend jusqu'aux meilleures œuvres des années 50." Djaout, "Un film sur Kateb," 17.

36. In 1996 the Algerian constitution was revised to finally include a reference to Tamazight, the Berber language. Tamazight was declared, along with Islam and "*arabité*," one of the three characteristics of Algerian identity, though Arabic remained the national and official language of Algeria. It was only after the 2001 Kabyle uprising that the Algerian constitution was completed with Article 3 Bis, which indicates that Tamazight is also a national language. However, Arabic remains the sole official language in Algeria.

37. See chapter 2.

38. This is not a new idea in itself, but this is the first time that its complexities are explored in a novel.

39. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 76.

40. "J'ai toujours été intéressé par une sorte de rapport à l'histoire, l'histoire telle qu'on la vit et telle qu'on l'écrit . . . et j'ai toujours privilégié l'histoire individuelle sur l'histoire officielle" (I was always interested in history, history as we live it and as we write it . . . and I always favored individual history over official history). Bernard, "De vive voix, paroles de Tahar Djaout," 33. In the novel, the ancestor used to declare himself to be a descendant of the Almoravids ("Il était une fois un vieux Berbère qui aimait s'affirmer d'ascendance almoravide"), but he is fascinated by Ibn Toumert, the very person who precipitated the fall of the Amoravids, so the narrator's professional interest gets tangled with his reflections on his ancestry. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 89.

41. Ibid., 16.

42. See Jarrod Hayes' discussion in *Queer Nations: Marginal Sexualities in the Maghreb*. Although Hayes' analysis essentially concerns *Les chercheurs d'os*, his discussion on Djaout's role in "bringing skeletons out of the Nation's closet" is pertinent here, too. By writing on Ibn Toumert, Djaout reveals segments of Algeria's history that have been concealed, such as the repression of homosexuality.

43. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 77.

44. Ibid., 76.

45. Ibid., 17.

46. Ibid., 49.

47. Ibid., 201.

48. L. Matoub, *Rebelle*, 20.

49. Ibid., 26.

50. Ibid., 41.

51. Ibid., 58. Zouaoua is the name of a Berber confederation from which the first indigenous infantrymen were recruited by the French. Zouaoua gave the French language the word *Zouave*. In this context, it means "barbarian" and "boorish."

52. Djerdi, "Evocation Matoub Lounès."

53. Ziane, "Lounès Matoub," 68.

54. Ibid., 46.

55. People would listen to his cassettes, which circulated from hand to hand.

56. Ziane, "Lounès Matoub," 53.

57. See L. Matoub, *Rebelle*, 104.

58. Ibid., 105–6.

59. Despite all his efforts, Matoub was never imprisoned, though he was arrested several times.

60. L. Matoub, *Rebelle*, 109.

61. Ibid., 110–14.

62. Matoub never really recovered from the shooting; he was left with severe and irreversible physical damage. In his autobiography, he relates how he went through numerous surgical operations, lost five centimeters in one leg because of a medical error, and caught one infection after another. After several months, since his condition was not improving, friends and family convinced him to go to France to seek better care. The Algerian government opposed his transfer until Matoub started a hunger strike. He finally left Algeria for France, where he spent six weeks at the Beaujon hospital.

63. L. Matoub, *Rebelle*, 134–35.

64. Ziane, "Lounès Matoub," 59–60.

65. "Après l'enlèvement du chanteur Matoub Lounès la branche dure du mouvement berbère menace l'Algérie d'une 'guerre totale,'" *Le Monde*, September 28, 1994.

66. The reasons for Matoub's liberation are unclear. Was the GIA afraid of a major uprising in Kabylia and possibly an armed guerilla attack against its force? In his autobiography, Matoub explains how the GIA hoped to use him in Kabylia to defend its cause, for he would be listened to by his compatriots. While in GIA custody, Matoub made all kinds of promises to his abductors, among which were to renounce singing and become religious. He even started praying in front of them.

67. L. Matoub, *Rebelle*, 253.

68. *La Dépêche de Kabylie*, "Matoub était une locomotive" [editorial], January 8, 2006. Accessed June 20, 2013. http://www.depechedekabylie.com/evenement/14861-matoub-etait-une-locomotive.html.

69. N. Matoub, Interview on *Bouillon de culture*.

70. See "La tension reste vive en Kabylie après l'enterrement de Lounès Matoub," *Le Monde*, June 30, 1998.

71. "La Kabylie a perdu son rebelle" [editorial], *Le Monde*, June 27, 1998, 1.

72. Ziane, "Lounès Matoub," 95.

73. Ibid., 107.

74. "On ne peut guère le représenter. C'est une lourde responsabilité. La seule façon de le faire, c'est le ressusciter" (We cannot represent him. It is a heavy responsibility. The only way to do it is to resuscitate him). Mokrane, "Personne ne peut jouer le rôle de Matoub."

75. Although Bourdieu has been criticized for his unbalanced and exclusive attention to the code of honor, dismissing other aspects of Kabyle political and social life, his text on the subject remains an important source of information on the notion of honor, which was and remains essential in Kabylia.

76. "L'étendard des pauvres et des persécutés de l'Algérie toute entière contre la Hogra." Kessi, "Matoub est l'étendard des pauvres et des persécutés."

77. J. Amrouche, "L'éternel Jugurtha," 375–81.

78. See the introduction by Yalla Seddiki in L. Matoub, *Mon nom est combat*, 7; and Smaïl Grim's interview by Ahmed Kessi, "Matoub est l'étendard des pauvres et des persécutés."

79. All official documents had to be written in Arabic. All foreign films, docu-

mentaries, and shows had to be translated or dubbed in Arabic. The same applied to road signs, billboards, and so on.

80. After his abduction, Matoub realized the importance of his struggle and the need to expand it to all of Algeria. In his autobiography, he declares that it was time for him to fight for all of Algeria, not just Kabylia: "Maintenant je pense à l'Algérie dans sa totalité, au malheur qui risque de dévaster le pays. Je dois apprendre à me battre pour la société algérienne dans son ensemble." L. Matoub, *Rebelle*, 264.

81. See Himeur, "Document: La dernière interview de Tahar Djaout."

82. Ibid.

83. Djaout, *Le dernier été de la raison*, 66–69.

84. Matoub claimed this position whenever he got the chance to do so. Invited on a TV set after his kidnapping, he wore a cap and T-shirt that said, "I laïc Algeria" (I like/secular Algeria).

85. A wid y ttrebin lxuan, y tthibin l Qran / Arted itij s amkan is (To those who love religion and love the Koran / Please bring the sun back to its place).

86. North African writers (Driss Chraïbi and Abdelkebir Khatibi, among others) often write about the child's difficult and sometimes painful experience learning the Koran. They often compare it to learning French, as mentioned earlier in regard to Matoub.

87. Djaout, *Le dernier été de la raison*, 61–62.

88. Ibid., 115.

89. See Chemakh, "Regard sur la poésie de Lounès Matoub."

90. The most influential Kabyle poet-singer of exile died and is buried in France. The Algerian government refused his repatriation.

91. Djaout, *L'invention du désert*, 89.

92. Ibid.

Chapter 5. Assia Djebar and the Mountain Language

Epigraph source: Pinter, *Mountain Language*, 14.

1. There are a few exceptions to the opinion regarding Djebar's work, notably Monique Gadant, Marnia Lazreg, and Andrea Page Gracki. Marnia Lazreg is one of very few critics to point to the absence of the treatment of class when addressing feminism in North Africa and the Middle East. See Lazreg, "Feminism and Difference." In the same article Lazreg also laments the focus on the religious paradigm and argues that these readings produce a reductive and ahistorical conception of women.

2. Hiddleston, *Assia Djebar*, 5.

3. Ibid., 10.

4. INA Archives. "Midi 2," December 1, 1981.

5. "Des français pour les kabyles," *Libération*, May 7, 1981. Among the signatories were P. Bourdieu, G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, La Bollardière, M. Nadeau, and J. Rancière.

6. Djebar, "Le discours de Francfort."

7. Fanon, "Assia Djebar, une femme, un film, un regard." During this period in which she did not write, Djebar produced two films.

8. Tahon, "*Romans de femmes algériennes*," 96–97.

9. Djebar, *Les alouettes naïves*, 27.

10. Ibid., 109.

11. Ibid., 325.

12. Ibid., 425.

13. *Nouba* means "taking turns" in Arabic and Berber. *Nouba* also refers to musical pieces of Hispanic-Muslim origin. Ethnomusicologist Mehenna Mahfoufi discusses the Arabo-Berber substrate of this music, and especially that of the secular Kabyle village music. In the traditional repertoire of the drummers, he identifies a number of pieces such as '*nnuba n essuq,*' (the nouba of the market) '*nnuba t-teslit,*' (the nouba of the bride) and '*nnuba l-henni*' (the nouba of the henna). See Mahfoufi, "Analyse d'une pièce vocale au rythme non mesuré."

14. This is a postmodern technique whereby the narrative voice is dislocated and fragmented (see Lyotard's end of grand narrative or Derrida's deconstruction). Réda Bensmaïa, in his article on *La nouba*, makes this argument when he refers to filmmakers to whom Djebar is indebted, saying that their work is preoccupied with "abolishing classical narrative continuity, the protagonists' psychological identity, and the unbroken thread of meaning—all previously taken for granted." See Bensmaïa and Gage, "La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua," 880. However, there actually is an authoritative narrative voice in *La nouba* (Leila), and moreover, given that *La nouba* is the first film that ostensibly addresses Algerian women's lives and their role in the war—themes that point toward the idea of construction—the deconstructive venture seems a bit premature, if not inadequate or contradictory.

15. I acknowledge here the collective effort of several persons from the village of Aghribs, Algeria, who watched the scene repeatedly and helped me decode and translate it. I thank them for their time and help.

16. During a roundtable discussion, Djebar mentioned that the actress playing the character Leila is Egyptian. The choice of an Egyptian woman was probably due to the fact that at the time it was difficult to find Algerian actresses who could speak standard Arabic.

17. Clarisse Zimra writes, "[Djebar] had to present the project as a recovery of war archives—a project favorably interpreted by the state censors as male-oriented—in order to reach the majority of her illiterate female compatriots (unpublished interview)." See Zimra, "Writing Women," 77. On the other hand, the film, made for Algerian TV, was seldom shown and never made it to movie theaters. It is now available to U.S. viewers through "Women Make Movies," but the copy is of poor quality for viewing.

18. The first and immediate difficulty with the movie remains the linguistic obstacle, which is ignored. Instead, the emphasis is put on the viewer's motivation to appreciate an innovative work of art. Bensmaïa cites an interview with an Algerian journalist who asked Djebar about the difficulties of reading her film, to which the filmmaker replied, "My film is not a difficult film. What I ask of the viewer is some effort." See Bensmaïa and Gage, "La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua," 877.

19. See Djebar's comments on French TV mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

20. Mortimer, "Entretien avec Assia Djebar," 205.

21. To these linguistic complications, one must add the different subtitles and dubbings. Leila's voice-over was first written in French by Djebar, who cotranslated it

into Arabic, to then take it up again in French in the film's French version. Donadey, *Recasting Postcolonialism*, 53.

22. Algerian TV (ENTV) was the exclusive property of the government and its party, the FLN, which had control over the programming and often used the TV to disseminate its propaganda.

23. Bensmaïa and Gage, "La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua."

24. Ibid., 878.

25. Ibid., 877.

26. For example, Laurence Huughe construes *La nouba* as "a precious collection of narratives by women who experienced the war of liberation close up and at a distance" (Huughe, "'Ecrire comme un voile,'" 867). Zahia Salhi interprets the movie as a highly political film against Arabo-Islamism and claims that it restores "the use of colloquial Arabic, the only language these women could speak and understand allowing them thus to express themselves in the face of the government's language policy that did not allow other languages but standard Arabic in the media, and most importantly it re-established the dialogue between women, yet again in the language they could converse in." Z. Salhi, "Between the Languages of Silence," 95. The same idea is defended by André Benhaïm, who argues that the film is about listening to women who never speak: "Il s'agit de laisser parler et de se mettre à l'écoute de celles qu'on n'entend jamais et qui se taisent toujours" (it is about letting speak and listen to those whom we never hear and who always keep quiet). Benhaïm, "Ecouter-voir (ou l'autre vie) autour de La nouba d'Assia Djebar," 4. It is also defended by Valérie Budig-Markin, who writes that Djebar's film "keeps women's speech and oral history safe from the danger of extinction, from the danger of a definitive cultural silence." Budig-Markin, "Writing and Filming the Cries of Silence," 898.

27. Donadey, *Recasting Postcolonialism*, 45.

28. Ibid., 53.

29. Gafaïti, "L'autobiographie plurielle Assia Djebar," 155.

30. Donadey, "Rekindling the Vividness of the Past: Assia Djebar's Films and Fiction," 892.

31. Bensmaïa, *Experimental Nations*, 94.

32. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 86.

33. Young, *White Mythologies*, 148.

34. Donadey, *Recasting Postcolonialism*, xxii.

35. Djebar, *L'amour la fantasia*, 244.

36. Djebar, *Fantasia an Algerian Cavalcade*, 218.

37. Djebar, *La femme sans sépulture*; and Djebar, *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*.

38. "Dans *L'amour, la fantasia*, je me suis tournée vers une écriture d'autobiographie après quarante ans, après *Femmes d'Alger* et après ma première expérience de cinéma—donc après tout un travail sur le regard. J'ai senti que la langue de l'autobiographie, quand elle n'est pas langue maternelle, fait que presque inévitablement, même sans le vouloir, l'autobiographie devient une fiction." (With *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*, I turned to autobiography after forty years, after *Women of Algiers* and after my first movie experience—so, after a lot of work on perception. I felt that the language used for autobiography, when it is not your native language, transforms almost inevitably,

almost against your will autobiography into fiction.) Quoted in Gauvin, *L'ecrivain francophone à la croisée des langues*, 23.

39. In an interview with Marguerite Le Clézio, Assia Djebar declared: "Qu'est-ce que c'est, dans une culture arabe, qu'une femme qui écrit? C'est un scandale." (What is a woman who writes in an Arab culture? A scandal). Le Clézio, "Assia Djebar," 232.

40. Abdel-Jaouad, "*L'amour, la fantasia*"; Geesey, "Collective Autobiography"; Mortimer, "Assia Djebar's 'Algerian Quartet'"; and Gafaïti, "L'autobiographie plurielle Assia Djebar."

41. Orlando, *Nomadic Voices of Exile*; and Murdoch, "Woman, Postcoloniality, Otherness."

42. Miller, "Representing Others," 3–4.

43. "La rupture opérée avec le monde des femmes est rachetée par le rôle que s'impose la femme écrivain: assurer la transmission du passé national" (The break from the world of women is redeemed by the role the writer imposes upon herself: that of ensuring the transmission of the national past). Gadant, "La permission de dire 'je,'" 99.

44. Marnia Lazreg, in her study on Algerian women, refutes the idea that Djebar's literary work gives voice to Algerian women, stating, "*Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* constitutes another way of silencing women, this time by a woman." See Lazreg, *Eloquence of Silence*, 201. Lazreg also briefly discusses Djebar's work with regard to Algerian culture, claiming that "the rejection of Algerian culture lock, stock and barrel infuses [Djebar's] more historical writings with a nostalgic view of colonialism" (Lazreg, *Eloquence of Silence*, 201). Lazreg, however, does not illustrate her point further nor does she elaborate on her criticism.

45. Kelly, *Autobiography and Independence*, 335.

46. Hiddleston, "Feminism and the Question of 'Woman,'" 94, 95.

47. Hiddleston, *Assia Djebar*, 5.

48. "La pseudonymie n'est donc pas seulement une rupture avec les origines familiales et sociales: c'est une rupture avec les autres." Starobinski, *L'Œil vivant*, 195.

49. Khatibi, *La langue de l'autre*, 42.

50. Ibid.

51. It is necessary to clarify what I mean by *modern*. Although today the term has become synonymous with *improved*, *satisfactory*, or *efficient*, Raymond Williams reminds us that this was not always the case. While typically contrasted with *ancient*, before the twentieth century most of its uses and implications were unfavorable. And so, "modern" is used here in contrast with "ancient," without its valorizing overtone.

52. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 56.

53. A similar episode occurs in *Les alouettes naïves*, when Nfissa looks at Karim, who looks back at her, and she declares, "comme si je l'avais remercié, alors, de si bien me regarder, ce qui me permettait à mon tour d'exister vraiment" (as if I thanked him, then, to look at me so well, which allowed me, in my turn, to really exist). Djebar, *Les alouettes naïves*, 109.

54. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 63.

55. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 62–63. All translated excerpts of *Vaste est la prison* come from Betsy Wing's translation.

56. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 71.

57. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 72.

58. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 81.

59. Ibid., 82.

60. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 82.

61. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 116–17.

62. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 119.

63. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 110.

64. Freud, *General Psychological Theory*, 70.

65. Gadant, "La permission de dire 'je,'" 270.

66. "Il n'y a que le diable (*Chitan*) qui dit moi"; "il n'y a que le diable qui commence par lui-même." Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*, 39.

67. Déjeux, "Au Maghreb," 193.

68. In *L'amour, la fantasia*, the narrator is eleven or twelve when she is "expelled" from women's intimate sphere ("expulsée à onze, douze ans de ce théâtre des aveux féminins"). Djebar, *L'amour, la fantasia*, 177.

69. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 279.

70. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 286.

71. This dance scene, chosen for its symbolic force, should not obscure the fact that the origin of the split lies primarily in the French education the narrator received, which turned her away from her mother language and her female compatriots. Another primordial and symbolic scene is when the narrator's father first took her to school.

72. Djebar, *L'amour, la fantasia*, 144.

73. Djebar, *Fantasia an Algerian Cavalcade*, 127. All translated excerpts of *L'amour, la fantasia* come from Dorothy S. Blair's translation.

74. Djebar, *L'amour, la fantasia*, 144.

75. Djebar, *Fantasia an Algerian Cavalcade*, 127. This mention is also reminiscent of the female protagonist in the film *La nouba*, who never sits with women on the floor but instead either squats or sits in a chair.

76. Djebar, *L'amour, la fantasia*, 144.

77. Djebar, *Fantasia an Algerian Cavalcade*, 127.

78. Clerc, *Assia Djebar*, 107.

79. Jane Hiddleston, who analyzes Djebar's attempt to establish an alternative, feminine history in *Vaste est la prison*, comes to the same conclusion when she declares that "the text concludes by lamenting its own failure, alluding to absence and lack rather than creativity." See Hiddleston, "Feminism and the Question of 'Woman,'" 101.

80. J. Amrouche, *Chants berbères de Kabylie*, 72.

81. T. Amrouche, *Les chants de Taos Amrouche,* Song #1.

82. J. Amrouche, *Chants berbères de Kabylie*, 48.

83. Casajus, "Déchiffrages."

84. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 144–47.

85. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 146–50.

86. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 159.

87. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 163.

88. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 150.

89. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 152.
90. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 160.
91. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 163.
92. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 119.
93. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 121.
94. It is not surprising that Anne-Marie Nahlovsky dedicates a chapter of her book to what she calls "la langue des pierres" (the language of the stones) in *Vaste est la prison*, for this is how the language finally appears in the novel. And, as we know, stones do not speak. Nahlovsky, *La femme au livre*.
95. "La négation pure et simple étant devenue difficile, on concède le passé berbère de l'Algérie, tant que celui-ci reste circonscrit dans l'Antiquité." Chaker and Abrous, "De l'antiquité au musée," 180.
96. Ibid., 182.
97. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 245.
98. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 250.
99. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 245.
100. Ibid., 246.
101. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 251.
102. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 237.
103. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 243.
104. Djebar, *Vaste est la prison*, 226.
105. Ibid., 246.
106. Djebar, *So Vast the Prison*, 251.
107. Djebar, "Les yeux de la langue."
108. Ibid., 97–98.
109. Ibid., 98.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., 99.
112. Ibid.

Conclusion

1. See Roberts, "Co-opting Identity."

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Index

Page numbers in *italics* refer to illustrations.

Abbas, Ferhat, 51, 63, 252n88
Abdallah, Mogniss H., 126
Abdelkader, Hadj Hamou, 48, 50
Abdoun, Sidi Mohammed, 49
Abranis, 151
Abrous, Dehbia, 118
Académie berbère d'échanges et de recherches culturelles, 115
"A d n emmekti tamurt" (Let's remember Kabylia), 118
Afous, 151, 152
African American, 20–21
Africanist presence, 20–29
Afrique, 29
L'Afrique latine, 34
Ageron, Charles-Robert, 249n21
Agraw, 267n145
Ahmed ben Mostapha, goumier (Ben Cherif), 50
Aït Adella village, *158*
Aït Ahmed, Hocine, 54, 110, 115, 253n101, 259n3
Aït Amrane, Mohand Idir, 6, 7
Aït Lounis, Hamid, 8
Aït Menguellet, Lounis, 7, 186, 190, 267n145
Algeria: Berber identity dismissed, suppressed, denied, 3, 27, 114, 116, 122, 259n13; *Le blanc de l'Algérie*, 208; Civil War, 16, 25, 159, 161–62, 179, 193–94; distrust of Berbers, 26–27, 110; Fort National army tanks, *153*; French education's primary objective, 56–57; as French term, 249n24; French world dialogue with, 69; identified as totally Arab state, 28; National Charter, 171, 229, 235, 254n11, 261n45; orientalization of, 14, 29, 33, 51, 216, 223; Pan-African Festival, 81; Tamazight in national constitution, 196, 243, 269n36; War of Independence from France, 2–3, 26, 105, 112, 115, 127, 130, 131, 257nn95–96, 259n3
Algeria in France (Silverstein), 146
Algerian, 254n20
Algerian Arabic (Darija), 205, 247n6, 248n18; in Kabyle village life, 55, 270n79
Algerian Civil War, 16, 25, 159, 179, 193–94; *Le blanc de l'Algérie*, 208; cancellation of national elections igniting, 161–62
Algerianist Movement, 16, 21, 29–47, 250n49, 251n69
Algerian MALG (Algerian Secret Service), 115
Algerian TV (ENTV), 214–15, 267n5, 273n22
Algerian War of Independence, 2–3, 112, 115, 127, 130, 131; Aït Ahmed on, 259n3; Amicale des Algériens en Europe as FLN satelite, 260n19, 260nn21–22; Amrouche, J., participation in, 67, 105; *Chants Kabyles de la guerre d'indépendance*, 26, 57; Mammeri's role in, 257nn95–96; against one-party rule, 114, 122, 162; one-party rule and silencing voice of, 110; SNED, ENTV, and ENL as voice of FLN, 267n5, 273n22. *See also* Front de Libération Nationale
Algérie-Actualité, 163

Algiers: Algerian Cup incidents, 114; Berber student research groups in, 113; Maison de la Culture, 46; simultaneous marches in Paris and, 262n66; University of, 112–13, 117–18, 121
Ali, Farid, 253n112
Allam, Djamel, 151, 262n49
Allaoua, Mohamed, 152
Allaoua, Zerrouki, 253n112
Alloula, Abdelkader, 111
Almoravid dynasty, 165, 169, 176–77, 268n22, 269n40
Les alouettes naïves (Djebar), 203, 208, 274n53
Alphonse (Tadjer), 147
L'amant imaginaire (Amrouche, T.), 77, 81–82
Amar, Oukil, 57, 58
Amazigh, 4–6, 109; identity developed in Paris, 90, 108; Institut royal de la culture amazighe, 243; "Kker a mmis umazigh," 7; Tunisian renaissance, 243. *See also* Berber language
Amazigh World Congress, 12, 243
Amicale des Algériens en Europe, 260n19, 260nn21–22
Amnesty International, 150, 263n67
L'amour la fantasia (Djebar), 19, 273n38, 274n39, 274nn43–44, 275n68
Amrouche, Fadhma Aïth Mensour (mother), 17, 66
Amrouche, Jean El Mouhoub, 17, 66, 68; l'esprit d'enfance, 65, 67; Farès with, 255n43; introspective and meditative voice of, 254n23; "L'éternel Jugurtha," 72–75; "Le livre qui manque," 255n43; radio show interviews, 69–71, 255n34; relinquishing part of himself, 255n30
Amrouche, Taos: Académie berbère d'échanges et de recherches culturelles, 115; *L'amant imaginaire*, 77, 81–82; Berber culture and, 118; compatriots construe songs as "missionary songs," 106; first Algerian woman novelist, 65, 254n20; *Jacinthe noire*, 75–76, 256n70; the Other's role in articulating one's self, 17, 75–82, 206–7, 261nn36–37; *Rue des tambourins*, 77–80, 256n70; *Solitude ma mère*, 76–77, 80
Amrouche family, 16, 65
Ancestor, as trap of amnesia or fixation, 175–76
Ancient beginnings: Almoravid dynasty, 165, 169, 176–77, 268n22, 269n40; Berber language, 60, 235–36, 238; folktales, 59, 81, 90, 171, 172–73, 180, 229, 254n11; modern versus ancient, 274n51. *See also* Kings; Queens
"Angoisse de la jeunesse," 67
Les ANI du "Tassili" (Tadjer), 138–40
L'anniversaire (Feraoun), 87, 257n81
ANP. *See* Popular National Army
Anthropological studies, of Berbers, 23, 248n5; *Le conte kabyle,* étude éthnologique, 260n29
Anti-racism. *See* Racism
Arab, 22, 24, 27, 248n16
The Arab Avant-Garde Experiments in North African Art and Literature (Khalil), 24
Arabization, 22; Djebar on, 205–6; two poles of resistance against, 111; of urban environment, 112–13, 261n45. *See also* Berber identity
Arab Spring, 242
L' Arche à vau-l'eau, 163
Arkoun, Mohamed, 115
Armed Islamic Group (GIA), 187; reasons for Matoub's liberation, 270n66
Armstrong, Louis, 20–21
Article 3 Bis, Algerian constitution, 196, 269n36
"Assagui Ligh" ("Today I Am"), 8
Association des Oulémas musulmans algériens, 51
Association of Algerian Writers, 29–30
Atlantic Charter, 52
Audisio, Gabriel, 45, 251n65
Au pied des monts éternels (Duchêne), 38
"L'aurore et la médaille d'argent" (Abdoun), 49
"Aux sources de la créativité des années cinquante" (Colonna), 55
"A Vava Inuva," 120, 150
L'aventure de Sidi-Flouss (Duchêne), 38, 41–44
Ay izem anda tellid (Oh Lion Where are You?), 18
Azem, Slimane, 57, 58, 113, 253n112
Aziza (Debèche), 58

Azru N'Thur, *158*
Aztecs, 242, 247n4

El-Baçaïr, 261n45
Bakhtin, Mikhail, 87
Baldwin, James, 20
Bali, Abdelmadjib, 119
Banlieue (immigrant suburb), 18
"Banlieue," 151
Le Banquet (Mammeri), 242
Baraka, 125
Barraud, Henry, 75
Basque, 247n4
Basset, André, 14
Basset, Henri, 23, 60
Belaïd, 57, 58
Belghoul, Farida, 133, 135–37, 145, 265n98
Belkacem, Krim, 113
Ben Ali, Saad, 48
Ben Badis, Cheikh Abdelhamid, 51
Ben Bella, Ahmed, 28, 54
Ben Cherif, Mohamed Ben Si Ahmed, 48, 50
Benchicou, Mohamed, 245–46
Bendjedid, Chadli, 206
Benguigui, Yamina, 264n86
Benhaïm, André, 273n26
Ben Ibrahim, Slimane, 48
Ben Mohamed, Lahouari, 263n70
Bennabi, Malek, 48, 63
Bennaï, Si Ouali, 252n97
Benni Yenni village, 56
Ben Rahal, Si M'Hamed, 48, 252n84
Ben Salah, Athman, 254n23
Ben Sedira, Belkacem, 59
Bensmaïa, Réda: on *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, 215–16, 272n14, 272n18; on pedagogy of narrating nation's history, 170–71
Benyounès, *155*
Berber Academy, Paris, 114–15, 117, 260n23; Bessaoud and, 116, 260n22; Tifinagh circulated by, 260n24
Berber alphabet (Tifinagh), 207; ancient origins, 60, 235–36, 238; Bessaoud's choice of, 260n24; Bounab's and Idjeki-ouane's presentations at University of Paris VIII, 117; Cercle Culturel Berbère and *Itij*, 121; in contemporary North Africa, 235; Djebar's rediscovery of, 218, 222, 229–35; emotional charge of using, 116
Berber-Beur literature: *Les ANI du "Tassili,"* 138–40; *Beur's Story*, 141; commonalities of, 148–49; commonalities of North African youth, 134; early Beur fiction, 147; father-child relationship among, 135–38, 147, 265n98; generation gap among, 109; *Georgette!*, 135–37, 265n98; homeland struggle and, 138–44; *Journal "Nationalité: immigré(e)*," 140–41, 266n120; Kabylia acknowledged by, 144; in Maghrebi-French literature classification, 147; nonexploration of Berber ancestry by, 133; objective of, 146; *Le porteur de cartable*, 143–44; *Le sourire de Brahim*, 144–45, 266n130; topics explored by, 148; *Une fille sans histoire*, 137–38
Berber consciousness, emergence of, 2–3, 51–57. *See also* Berber identity
Berber Cultural Association, 255n43
Berber Cultural Movement (MCB), 122, 262nn57–58
Berber Dahir, 27
Berber diaspora, 14, 248n19
Berber Encyclopedia, 260n29
Berbères d'Europe, 132
Berber francophone writers, 66–75; ensuring survival of Berber culture, 90; identity dialectics, 58–64; starting the dialogue, 64–65. *See also* Amrouche, Jean El Mouhoub; Amrouche, Taos; Feraoun, Mouloud; Mammeri, Mouloud; Ouary, Malek
Berber identity: Arabic and exclusive denial of, 194, 270n79; Boulifa on, 51; denial of, 26, 104, 110–14, 179, 191, 238, 242–45; dialectics of, 58–64; dialogue with, 64–65; dismissed, suppressed, denied, 3, 27, 114, 116, 122, 259n13; distrust of Berbers, 26–27, 110; in *Le grain dans la meule*, 17, 65, 99–104; mimicking of, 72–75; Montaigne on painting oneself, 84–87; orientalization versus, 14, 29, 33, 51, 216, 223; the Other, 55, 59, 76; Other as within oneself, 92–98; the Other in, 55, 59; "La Permission de dire 'je,'" 76, 255n60; strike of the school bag, 242; Tifinagh as embodiment of, 260n24; in

Berber identity—*continued*
Une fille sans histoire, 26, 104, 110–14, 242–45; use of first-person singular, 76, 255n60, 271n1
Berbérie, 32
Berberist crisis (1949), 53–55, 57, 253n104
Berber language (Tamazight): absent from spheres of power, 14; in Algerian constitution, 196, 243, 269n36; ancient origins, 60, 235–36, 238; Beur movement and concern for, 131–32; Cercle Culturel Berbère and *Itij*, 121; in contemporary North Africa, 235; Dallet's Kabyle dictionary, 254n11; Djebar's rediscovery of Tifinagh, 218, 222, 229–35; Djebar's relationship with, 236–39; as language of resistance, 207–8; regional dialects, 14–15; survival and adaptation of, 6; at University of Paris VIII, 116–17, 247n4, 260n26. *See also specific writer*
Berber modern popular music: break with Middle Eastern music, 149; Kabyle songs and, 109, 120, 150–52; modern technology and, 149; new Kabyle artists, 149–51, 267n145; songs of resistance, 149–50
Berbers: as Africanist presence, 20–29; disassociation from French missionaries, 260n20, 260n21; distinct history and culture of, 109; distrust of, 26–27, 110; Djebar's reappropriation of Berber history, 204; identity emergence, 2–3, 51–57; interest in, 3, 14, 46, 48, 55, 59, 62, 64, 81, 89, 118, 204, 208, 220, 244–45, 266n130, 269n40; as "invented," 90, 112, 241, 242; mental decolonization, 25, 244; Muslim Arab-Berberism, 51; Nek d Amazigh, 4–6; paradoxes and contradictions of, 5–6; recent developments, 245–46; rich oral tradition, 59–60; as scapegoat, 242, 245
Berber secessionist movement, 28, 249n7, 259n4
Berber Spring: Berber Cultural Movement born out of, 122, 262nn57–58; Berber musicians mobilized, 149–51; Beur Movement overlapping, 109; Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, 235; Mammeri lecture cancellation igniting, 117–18, 121–22; Matoub's songs encompassing, 182, 191, 200; Nek d Amazigh during, 4–6; objectives of, 109
Le Berger d'Akfadou (Duchêne), 38, 43–44
Bernard, Michel-Georges, 167
Bertrand, Louis, 30–31, 33
Bessaoud, Mohand-Aarav, 115–16, 259n17, 260n20; use of Berber alphabet, 260n24
Beur, 123; Beur generation compared to Berber generation, 128–32; Carte de séjour, 151; family structures, 128–32, 264n91; Franco-Berber people, 31–36, 250n49; "The Kabyle Song in France and the Memory of the Immigration," 26. *See also* Berber-Beur literature
Les Beur de Seine (Lallaoui), 146
Beur FM radio, 126, 145, 151, 263n80
Beur generation, 128–32
Beur March (1983), 18, 123–31, 150, 263nn72–73
Beur movement, 108–9, 123, 127, 133; older Berbers' estrangement from, 131–32
Beur's Story (Kessas), 141–43
Beur TV, 145
Bhabha, Homi, 2, 216–17
Le blanc de l'Algérie (Djebar), 208
Bonn, Charles, 62
Bouamama, Saïd, 124; on Beur marches, 127–28, 263n73; on lack of collective memory, 130–31
Boudjma, *155*
Bouhali, Larbi, 63
Boukhedenna, Sakinna, 109, 133, 140–41, 146, 265n114, 266n120
Boulifa, Saïd, 59, 60
Boulifa, Si Amar, 51
Boumediène, Houari, 113, 114
Bounab, Mustapha, 117
Bourdieu, Pierre, 104, 191, 226, 270n75
Bourdil, Laurence, 256n70
Boussouf, Abdelhafid, 115
Bouteflika, Abdelaziz, 24; Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, 235
Bouyezgarene, Arab, 253n112
Bracco, Hélène, 264n90
Breton, 242, 247n4
"Brigh ad cnugh" (I want to sing), 150
"Broumitche et le Kabyle" (Hagel and Lecoq), 37–38

Budig-Markin, Valérie, 273n26
Le Bulletin d'Études Berbères, 117
Burkina Faso, 12, 14

Café, 57, 115, 130, 151, 183, 264n87
Camus, Albert, 10–11, 45, 46, 89–90, 251n69, 256n73
Canary Islands, 12, 243
"Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak), 38
Cardinal, Marie, 20–21, 248n1
Carte de séjour (Beur band), 151
Carthage Theatre festival, Tunisia, 121
Cassard le berbère (Randau), 34–37
Celts, 242
Cendres (Amrouche, J.), 67
Center for Amazigh Studies and Research, Paris, 90
Cercle Culturel Berbère, 121
Le Cercle des amis d'Assia Djebar, 202
Ces voix qui m'assiègent: En marge de ma francophonie (Djebar), 204, 208
Chacal ou la ruse des dominés (Yacine, T.), 106
La chaîne 2, 113, 118–19, 206, 261n45
Chaker, Salem, 55, 56, 60, 263n67
"La chanson du Kabyle," 151
Chants berbères de Kabylie (Amrouche, J.), 67, 70
Chants Kabyles de la guerre d'indépendance (Mahfoufi), 26, 57
Chants sauvés de l'oubli, 81
Chao, Manu, 150
Charlot, Edmond, 45
Chatterjee, Partha, 22
Cheikh, Mohammed Ould, 48, 50, 252n84
Chenoua, 4, 149, 205. *See also La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*
Les chercheurs d'os (Djaout), 19, 165, 175, 269n42
Chikhi, Beïda, 72
Claudel, Paul, 17, 69
La colline oubliée (Mammeri), 17, 62, 65, 91–92, 257n101, 261n30
Colonna, Fanny, 55, 56, 260n29
Les Colons (Randau), 29
"Le combat Algérien," 9
Le Congrès des ouvriers nord-africains de la région parisienne, 53
Contact zones, 2
Le conte kabyle, étude éthnologique (Lacoste-Dujardin), 260n29
Coty, René, 259n18
Crespo, Gérard, 37
Culture and Society (Williams), 266n132

Dallet's Kabyle dictionary, 254n11
Les damnés de la terre (Fanon), 244
Daoud, Kamel, 118
Darija. *See* Algerian Arabic
Debèche, Djamila, 58, 254n20
Dédoublement (divided self), 23–25, 49–50, 62–64
Déjeux, Jean, 62, 141, 256n61, 260n29
Deleuze, Gilles, 2
Delorme, Christian, 124
De Maupassant, Guy, 29
"Dénuement," 67
Le départ du père, 135
La Dépêche de Kabylie, 189
Derrida, Jacques, 2
De Treize Poètes Algériens, 31–32
Diaspora, Berber, 14, 248n19. *See also* Beur; *specific country*
Dib, Mohammed, 58, 62, 246, 256n73, 257n78
Dibango, Manu, 150
Dirèche, Karima, 55
Divided self (Western and North African), 23–25
Djaïdja, Toumi, 124
Djaout, Tahar: assassination of, 267n4; *Les chercheurs d'os*, 19, 165, 175, 269n42; *L'invention du désert*, 19, 165–71; *Last Summer of Reason*, 267n1; Matoub compared to, 159–62; Matoub's commonalities with, 193–201; out of Berber village, 162–65; Yacine, K., admired by, 268n35
Djebar, Assia, 253n3; alienation from other women, 214–16; *Les alouettes naïves*, 203, 208, 274n53; *L'amour la fantasia*, 19, 273n38, 274n39, 274nn43–44, 275n68; on Arabization, 205–6; on Berber as language of resistance, 207–8; *Le blanc de l'Algérie*, 208; *Ces voix qui m'assiègent: En marge de ma francophonie*, 204, 208; critics of, 271n1; *Les enfants du nouveau monde*, 202; *La femme sans sépulture*, 208, 211; *Femmes d'Alger*, 203;

Djebar, Assia—*continued*
foiled autobiography, 219–25; genealogy of language/culture loss, 236–39; *Les impatients*, 202; *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, 19, 203–4, 208, 210–17, 272n21, 272nn13–18; *Les Nuits de Strasbourg*, 208; quest for self-knowledge, 218; on racism, 167–68; reappropriation versus evacuation of Berber history, 228–36; rediscovery of Tifinagh, 218, 222, 229–35; relationship with Tamazight, 236–39; road to *Vaste est la prison*, 208–10; *La soif*, 202; *Vaste est la prison*, 19, 204, 206–10, 217–19, 275n79, 276n94; "Les Yeux de la langue," 238–39
Djennane, Salah, 123
Djurdjura, 7, 151
Domrane, Malika, 152, 267n145
Don Quixote, 178
Double discourse (contradictory positions), 50
Double identity: *dédoublement*, 23–25, 49–50, 62–64; hybridité culturelle, 26, 69, 75, 80–81; Imache's bicultural identity and humanism, 137, 265nn105–6; *les mutants*, 62
Dougga, 230, 232–33
Du Bois, W.E.B., 87
Duchêne, Ferdinand, 31, 34, 38–44, 250n50
Dugas, Guy, 71, 74
Dunwoodie, Peter, 30, 48–50, 252n84

École d'Alger, 16, 45–47
École normale supérieure de Sèvres, 202
Editions Charlot, 45
Egypt, 14
Émission en langue arabe et berbère, 261n37
Émissions en langue arabe et kabyle, 118
Émissions musulmanes en langue arabe et berbère, 261n37
ENA. *See* L'Étoile nord-africaine
Les enfants du nouveau monde (Djebar), 202
Entreprise Nationale du Livre, 267n5
ENTV. *See* Algerian TV
L'esprit d'enfance (spirit of childhood), 65, 67
Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique (Bourdieu), 191
"L'éternel Jugurtha" (Amrouche, J.), 72–75
Ethnographic novel, 63
Étoile nord-africaine (ENA), 53, 252n80
Étoile secrète (Amrouche, J.), 67
El-Euldj, captif des Barbaresques (Khodja), 48, 50
Euro-Americans, 20–21
les évolués (the evolved), 47–51, 62
L'exproprié, 163

Falcou-Rivoire, Janine, 71
Fanon, Frantz, 244
Farès, Nabile, 2, 20–21, 67; Amrouche, J., with, 255n43
Faulkner, William, 20–21
La femme sans sépulture (Djebar), 208, 211
Femmes d'Alger (Djebar), 203
Feraoun, Mouloud: *L'anniversaire*, 87, 257n81; Camus' dialogue with, 10–11, 89–90; ethnic identity references about, 249n23; *Le fils du pauvre*, 3–4, 17, 62, 82–88, 256n73, 256n75, 257n78; "La littérature algérienne," 61–62, 251n68; as pacifist, 105, 258n123; *Les poèmes de Si Mohand*, 90; Sayeh on, 258n124
Fertile Memory Association, 127
Feydeau, Ernest, 29
FFS. *See* Front of Socialist Forces
Le FFS espoir et trahison (Bessaoud), 115
Le Fichier de documents berbères de Fort-National, Kabylia, 254n11
52 generation, 17, 62, 256n73
Le fils du pauvre (Feraoun), 3–4, 17, 62, 82–88, 256n73; hunger depicted in, 257n78; impact of, 256n75
Finkelkraut, Alain, 125
Flaubert, Gustave, 29
FLN. *See* Front de Libération Nationale; National Liberation Front
Folktales, 59, 81, 90, 180; history woven with, 171, 229, 254n11; as journey between dream and reality, 172–73. *See also* History
Le Forestier, Maxime, 150
Forge, 46
Fort National army tanks, *153*
France: Algerian immigrant population in, 116, 122; Algerianist Movement, 16, 21, 29–47, 250n49, 251n69; Algerian War of Independence from, 2–3, 26, 105, 112,

115, 127, 130, 131, 257nn95–96, 259n3; Berberist crisis, 53–55, 57, 253n104; Beur movement in, 108–9, 123, 127, 133; deportation procedures, 265n105; divide and conquer colonialist strategy, 27, 244; Germany's defeat of, 51–52; interest in Berbers, 3, 14, 46, 48, 55, 59, 62, 64, 81, 89, 118, 204, 208, 220, 244–45, 266n130, 269n40; Kabyle militants in, 108; *Madame la France*, 135; number of Kabyles living in, 14. *See also* Beur; the Other
France Plus, 263n76
Franco-Berber people, 31–36, 250n49. *See also* Beur
French Communist Party, 53
French Federation of the PPA-MTLD (Parti du Peuple Algérien, Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques), 53–54
French language, 23. *See also* Berber francophone writers
French missionaries: Amrouche, T., songs linked to, 106; Berbers as invention of, 90; Berbers' disassociation from, 260n20, 260n21; Dallet's Kabyle dictionary, 254n11; Kabyles equated with, 54; Pères Blancs' secular curriculum, 181, 248n6
Fromentin, Eugène, 29
Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), 67; Amicale des Algériens en Europe as satelite of, 260n19, 260nn21–22; Amrouche, J., participation in, 67, 105; constitution elaborated by, 196; one-party rule and silencing voice of, 110, 114, 122, 162; SNED, ENTV, and ENL as voice of, 267n5, 273n22
Front of Socialist Forces (FFS), 115

Gadant, Monique, 76, 255n60, 271n1
Gaddafi, Muammar al-, 243
Galand-Pernet, Paulette, 260n29
Gandhi, Mahatma, 124
Gandon, Francis, 113
Gardet, Louis, 259n5
Gast, Marceau, 248n6
Gautier, Theophile, 29
GEB. *See* Groupe d'Études Berbères
Gellner, Ernest, 260n29
Georgette! (Belghoul), 135–37, 265n98
El Gharbi, Mohammed, 105
GIA. *See* Armed Islamic Group
Gide, André, 17, 69
Giono, Jean, 69, 106, 256n70
Glissant, Edouard, 2
Global-local dialectic, 2, 12
Goldmann, Jean-Jacques, 150
Goodman, Jane, 120
Gracki, Andrea Page, 271n1
Graebner, Seth, 30, 49, 50
Le grain dans la meule (Ouary), 17, 65, 99–104
La grande maison (Dib), 62, 257n78
Grandguillaume, Gilbert, 111–12
Greek language, 247n6
La grève du cartable (strike of the school bag), 242
Grim, Smaïl, 190
Grimaud, Yvette, 3
Groupe d'Études Berbères (GEB), 116–17, 247n4, 260n26
Guattari, Félix, 2
Guibert, Armand, 71

Haddad, Malek, 58, 253n3
Hadj, Messali, 63
Hadj Ali, Bachir, 267n1
Hadjeres, Sadek, 63
Hadj Nacer, Abderrahmane, 246
Hagel, Charles, 37–38
Hamadi, Kamal, 118
Hammar, Mokrane, 190
Hamou, Hadj, 251n74, 252n84
Hanoteau, Adolphe, 44, 254n7
Hanouz, Mohand-Saïd, 115
Harbi, Mohammed, 26
Hargreaves, Alec, 148, 265n94
Hart, David, 260n29
El Hasnaoui, Cheikh, 253n112
Hasni, Cheb, 187
El Hassani, Mohamed Kacimi, 76, 255n460
Haut commissariat à l'amazighité (HCA), 242–43
Les hauteurs de la ville (Roblès), 10–11, 46
Hayes, Jarrod, 269n42
HCA. *See* Haut commissariat à l'amazighité
Herodotus, 248n20
Heureux les martyrs qui n'ont rien vu (Bessaoud), 115

Hiddleston, Jane, 204, 275n79
Hippolytus, 248n20
Histoire de ma vie (Amrouche, F. A. M.), 66
"Histoire d'une vendetta Kabyle" (Duchêne), 38
History: Bensmaïa on pedagogy of narrating national, 170–71; condemned by, 69; dealt with through constant debate, 178–79; Djebar's reappropriation of Berber, 204; as flexible and dynamic, 174–75; folktales woven with, 171, 229, 254n11
Hnifa, 253n112
Holt, Elizabeth, 267n3
Homosexuality, 269n42
L'Humanité, 122
Huughe, Laurence, 273n26
Hybridité culturelle, 26, 69, 75, 80–81

Ibazizen, Augustin-Belkacem, 51
Ibn Toumert, Mohammed, 177–78
Identity dialectics, 58–64
Idir, 109, 120, 149, 150–51
Idjekiouane, Belkacem, 117
Igoudar, 267n145
Ihaddaden, Zahir, 57, 58
Imache, Tassadit, 109, 133, 138, 145, 148; bicultural identity and humanism of, 137, 265nn105–6
Imazighen, 114, 259n16; Amazigh, 4–7, 108–9, 243; etymology of, 6–7. *See also* Berber language
Imazighène bulletin, 116, 260n23
Imazighen Imula, 267n145
IM'média, 126–27
Les impatients (Djebar), 202
Imperialism, 30–31
"In a Language That Was Not His Own" (Holt), 267n3
INALCO. *See* Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales
Indigène (native), 10–11, 36, 46, 247n10, 247n12; Les indigènes de la République, 264n84; insinuating themselves into French-defined cultural sphere, 47–51; veterans to be rewarded with citizenship, 252n82
Les indigènes de la République, 264n84
Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), 14
Institut royal de la culture amazighe (IRCAM), 243
L'invention du désert (Djaout), 19, 165–71
"The Invention of the Gaze," 167
IRCAM. *See* Institut royal de la culture amazighe
L'ironie du sort, 186
Les isefra: Poèmes de si mohand-ou-mhand (Mammeri), 117
Islam, 267n4; extremists, 187, 270n66; Koran of Barghawata, 59; north African local saints incorporated in, 247n6, 259n5; as North Africa's unity, 25; success in Algeria, 51
Itij (Sun), 121
Izri, Brahim, 149

Jacinthe noire (Amrouche, T.), 75–76, 256n70
Jeunesse Electronique de Tizi-Ouzou, 259n15
Jeunesse Sportive de Kabylie (JSK) soccer team, 114, 259n15
Jospin, Lionel, 189
Jouhandeau, Marcel, 255n34
Journal "Nationalité: immigré(e)" (Boukhedenna), 140–41, 266n120
JSK. *See* Jeunesse Sportive de Kabylie
Jugurtha (king, symbol of African resistance to Rome), 72–75, 116, 192–93, 207
Julien, Charles-André, 32

Kabyle identity, 6–7, 247n2; Algerian constitution revised, 196, 269n36; emergence of modern song, 109; first patriotic song, 7; new Kabyle song, 120, 150–52; school in, 1–2, 120; subversion of, 171–76; viewed by outsider, 6; Yacine, K., dramas as, 121
Kabyle language (Taqbaylit), 1, 12, 14; Dallet's Kabyle dictionary, 254n11
Kabyle Mountains, 1, 44
Kabyle Myth, 12, 27–28, 249n21
Kabyle radio, 57, 58
Kabyles: Berberist crisis impact on, 53–55, 57, 253n104; feeling of foreignness, 52–53
Kabylia, 1, 2–3, 12, 108; Algerian Arabic in, 55, 270n79; armed rebellion in, 110, *153*,

259n4; Berber student research groups in, 113; Cherry Festival protest in, 114; Le Fichier de documents berbères de Fort-National, 254n11; first Berber francophone writers from, 59; first general strike in, 262n62; first schools in, 56; immigration to France from, 131; insurrection against French, 52, 249n21; *maquis* in, 252n97; number of Beur authors from, 132; Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie, 244; soldiers of, *154*
La kabylie et les coutumes kabyles (Hanoteau and Letourneux), 44
Kacel, Karim, 151
El Kacem, Samih, 170
Kaddache, Mahfoud, 249n21
Kahina (queen), 116, 170
Kessas, Ferrudja, 109, 133, 141–43, 146
Kettane, Nacer, 109, 126, 144, 146, 266n130; independent media and, 145; role in Beur Movement, 133
Khadda, Mohamed, 267n1
Khadda, Naget, 88
Khadidja, 253n112
Khaldun, Ibn, 3
Khalil, Florès Andrea, 24
Khatibi, Abdelkebir, 24–25, 251n74, 256n73, 258n123
Khelil, Saïd, 116
Khodja, Chukri, 48, 50, 252n84
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 124
Kings: Jugurtha as symbol of African resistance to Rome, 72–75, 116, 192–93, 207; Koceila, 170. *See also* Queens
"Kker a mmis umazigh" (Rise up Son of Amazigh)(Aït Amrane), 7
Koceila (king), 170
Koran of Barghawata, 59

Lacan, Jacques, 61
Lacheraf, Mostefa, 163, 257n101
Lacoste-Dujardin, Camille, 260n29
Laïmèche, Ali, 252n97
Lakuy (school), 1–2
Lallaoui, Mehdi, 109, 146
Lanasri, Ahmed, 48–50, 252n84
Lapassade, Georges, 117
Last Summer of Reason (Djaout), 267n1
Latin Africa, 30–31; *L'Afrique latine*, 34
Latin alphabet, 136
Layachi, Azzedine, 3, 23, 249n7
Lazreg, Marnia, 271n1
Leconte, Daniel, 205
Lecoq, Louis, 37–38
Leïla jeune fille d'Algérie (Debèche), 58, 254n20
Letourneau, Roger, 53
Letourneux, Aristide, 44
"Lettre ouverte a . . . ," 18
Levy, Bernard Henry, 125
Liauzu, Claude, 37, 250n49
Libyan Berbers, 12, 14, 246; at Berber Academy in Paris, 260n23
"La littérature algérienne" (Feraoun), 61–62, 251n68
Littérature orale arabo-berbère, 260n29
Littératures francophones du Monde Arabe anthologie, 24
"Le livre qui manque" (Amrouche, J.), 255n43
The Location of Culture (Bhabha), 216–17
Lorcin, Patricia, 27, 55
Loti, Pierre, 29
Louatah, Sabri, 266n136
Lounès, Abderrahmane, 190
Lounès Matoub Le barde flingué (Lounès), 190
Lyons, Thomas, 63

Madame la France, 135
El Madani, Tawfik, 51
Maddy-Weitzman, Bruce, 3
Maghrebian, 22
Maghreb pluriel (Khatibi), 24
Mahfoufi, Mehenna, 3, 26, 57, 149
Maison de la Culture, Algiers, 46
Mait, 9
Mali, 12, 14, 260n23
Mammeri, Mouloud, 90, 99, 113, 254n5, 256n73, 260n24; *Le Banquet*, 242; *La colline oubliée*, 17, 62, 65, 91–92, 257n101, 261n30; lecture cancellation igniting Berber Spring, 117–18, 121–22; "La mort absurde des aztèques," 242; *L' opium et le bâton*, 91, 261n30; *Poèmes kabyles anciens*, 118; role in Algerian War, 257nn95–96; *Le sommeil du juste*, 17, 65, 91, 92–98, 261n30; *La traversée*, 91, 170

Mamoun, L'ébauche d'un idéal (Khodja), 48
"Manifestations parallèles pour l'identité kabyle en France et en Algérie," 262n66
Manifesto of the Algerian People, 252n88
Maquis (underground fighting), 252n97
Marçais, William Ambrose, 22
La martingale algérienne: Réflexions sur une crise (Nacer), 246
Masqueray, Emile, 56
Massinissa, 116, 207
Matheson, Scot Karen, 151
Matoub, Lounès, 4, 18, *155*, *156*, *158*, 262n49, 269n59, 270n74; Djaout compared to, 159–62; Djaout's commonalities with, 193–201; Kabyle childhood, 181–82; as Kabyle rebel, 179–81; *Lounès Matoub Le barde flingué*, 190; martyrdom and beyond, 189–93; as rascal and dandy, 182–83; reasons for GIA's liberation of, 270n66; *Rebelle*, 162, 182; seducing public and flirting with death, 183–89; severe and irreversible injuries, 270n62; village depiction, *157*
Matoub l'assoiffé d'azur (Grim), 190
Mauriac, François, 17, 69
Mauritania, 12, 14
MCB. *See* Berber Cultural Movement
Meddour, Azzedine, 172
Mediterranean humanism, 45–46, 251nn65–66
Mehenni, Ferhat, 12, *155*, 262n49
Meksa, 149
Memmi, Albert, 62, 74
Mémoires de la guerre d'Algérie (Bracco), 264n90
Mémoires d'immigrés (Benguigui), 264n86
Memory in the Flesh (Mustaghanami), 267n3
Menad, 149
Le mensonge de Dieu (Benchicou), 245–46
Mental decolonization, 25, 244
Métisse (hybrid), 26, 69, 75, 80–81
El Mili, Mubarak, 51
Mitterrand, François, 123–24, 205
Modern, ancient versus, 274n51. *See also* Ancient beginnings; Berber modern popular music
Modern Standard Arabic, 111, 212, 248n18; as Algeria's national language, 2–3, 25, 270n79; in *La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, 210–17. *See also* Algerian Arabic
Mohammed, Ben, 120
Mohammed prends ta valise ((Mohammed take your suitcase), 121, 262n52
Moh Said Ou Belaid, 253n112
Mokhtari, Rachid, 3
Molbert family, 258n125
La Montagne de Baya, 172
Montaigne, Michel de, 4, 84–87
Moroccan Berbers, 3, 12, 13, 14, 21; angst among, 245; Berber Dahir, 27; in France, 123; Institut royal de la culture amazighe, 243; Khatibi, 24–25; Tamazight official-language status, 196, 243, 269n36. *See also* Almoravid dynasty
Morrison, Toni, 20–21
"La mort absurde des aztèques" (Mammeri), 242
La mort d'Akli (Amrouche, J.), 71
Mortimer, Mildred, 213
El Moudjahid, 163, 267n5
El-Mouhoub, Jean, 17
Mounsi, 109
Movement for Berber Culture, 187
Muslim, 22, 248n15, 259n5, 267n4; -Arab Berberism, 51; French deep-seated fear of, 36–37. *See also* Arabization; Islam
Mustaghanami, Ahlam, 267n3
les mutants, 62
Myriem dans les Palmes (Cheikh), 48, 50

Nahlovsky, Anne-Marie, 276n94
Náhuatl, 242, 247n4
Naït Messaoud, Amar, 163
Nasser, Gamal Abdel, 260n20
Nasserism, 260n20
National Charter, 171, 229, 235, 254n11, 261n45
National Liberation Front (FLN), 110, 114, 122, 260n20
Naylor, Phillip C., 249n10
Nedjma (Yacine, K.), 174
Nek d Amazigh (I am Amazigh), 4–6
Niger, 14, 260n23
Nigeria, 14
La nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua (Djebar), 19, 203–4, 208, 210–11, 272n13,

272n21, 272nn15–17; Bensmaïa on, 215–16, 272n14, 272n18; female protagonist's alienation from other women, 214–16; palimpsestic structure of, 216–17; as stifled voices brought back into history, 216; use of Modern Standard Arabic in, 212–14
Nous autres, 125–26, 263n77, 263n79
Les Nuits de Strasbourg (Djebar), 208

Occitan, 247n4
Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française (ORTF), 66–67, 261n37
Olivaint, Maurice, 31
L' opium et le bâton (Mammeri), 91, 261n30
L 'Orchestre National de Barbès, 151
Organisation Spéciale (OS), 54, 252n99
Orientalization, 14, 29, 33, 51, 216, 223
ORTF. *See* Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française
Oryema, Geoffrey, 151
OS. *See* Organisation Spéciale
the Other: Amrouche, T., articulation of self and, 17, 75–82, 206–7, 261nn36–37; beginning of dialogue with, 64–65; in *Le grain dans la meule*, 17, 65, 99–104; identity dialectics, 58–64; Jugurtha's mimicking of, 72–75; Montaigne on painting oneself, 84–87; within oneself, 92–98
Ouanès, Twafik, 123
Ouary, Malek, 17, 99–104, 258n121, 261n40; on la chaîne 2 radio, 119; works by, 261n41
Ou El Hadj, Mohand, 153
Ouerdane, Amar, 54, 117
Ould-Braham, Ouahmi, 55
Ould Slimane, Salem, 260n23
Oulémas (religious movement), 261n45
Oulhaci, Abdelkader, 58
Ou-Mhand, Si Mohand, 52, 117
Oussalem, Mohand-Ouamer, 117, 122, 259n13

Pan-African Festival, Algeria, 81
Pan-Arabism, 54
Pan-Berberism, 260n23
Paris: Amazigh identity developed in, 90, 108; *banlieue*, 18; Berber Academy, 114–15, 116, 117, 260n22, 260n23, 260n24; Berber Cultural Association, 255n43; Berber student research groups in, 113; Beur March, 18, 123–31, 150, 263nn72–73; simultaneous marches in Algiers and, 262n66; University of Paris VIII, 116–17, 247n4, 260n26
Parle mon fils parle à ta mère (Sebbar), 128–29
Party of the Algerian People, 28
Pascal, Blaise, 86–87
Paul (saint), 99–100
Pensée-autre, 24–26
Pères Blancs, 181, 248n6
"La Permission de dire 'je'" (Gadant), 76, 255n60, 271n1
Personal voice, collective voice versus, 71–72
Pervillé, Guy, 51
La Peste (Camus), 10–11, 46, 89–90
Petit éloge de la mémoire (Sansal), 245
Petit Robert, 123
"Le peuple algérien est musulman, sa généalogie est arabe," 51
Pied-noir (people of European descent who left Algeria), 11–12, 143, 248n1, 248n14
Playing in the Dark (Morrison), 20–21
Les poèmes de Si Mohand (Feraoun), 90
Poèmes kabyles anciens (Mammeri), 118
Political songs, 58
Pomier, Jean, 29
Popular National Army (ANP), 259n4
Le porteur de cartable (Tadjer), 143–44
Prébois, Paul Leblanc de, 49
"The Prisoner," 229

Quandt, William B., 3
Quechua, 247n4
Queens: Kahina, 116, 170; Tin Hinan, 207, 218. *See also* Kings

Rabani, Mohamed, 123
Racism: Algeria's "new race," 16, 29–31; Berbers strategically pitted against Arabs, 37; from Berber to Berber-Beur, 123–32, 148–49, 264n82; Beur March against, 123–31, 150, 263nn72–73; Bouamama's lamentation, 130–31; Boukhedenna's rejection of French, 140; in *Cassard le berbère*, 35–36; in Djebar's

Racism—*continued*
third career stage, 167–68; in French schools, 134; "I am of the OTHER RACE . . . ," 167; Matoub's experience of, 181; Morrison and Farès on silence and evasiveness, 20–21; nineteenth century French theories, 56; in northern Africa, 243; portrayed in *Le sommeil du juste*, 92–99; portrayed in *Une fille sans histoire*, 137–38; RAP's campaign against, 126, 264n82; social activism against, 127; SOS Racisme, 263n76; in vision of École d'Alger, 46; white violence against North African immigrants, 123–24. *See also* Arabization
Radio-Alger, 17, 118
Radio Beur, 126, 145, 151, 263n80
Radio broadcasts: Amrouche, J., interviews, 69–71, 255n34; la chaîne 2, 113, 118–19, 206, 261n45; Kabyle radio, 57, 58; Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française, 66–67, 261n37; Radio-Alger, 17, 118; Radio Beur, 126, 145, 151, 263n80; Radio France, 17; Radio Télévision Française, 118, 261n37
Radio France, 17
Radio Télévision Française (RTF), 118, 261n37
Rahmani, Abdelkader, 115, 259n18, 264n90
Ramdane, Abane, 115
Randau, Robert, 29, 31–38
RAP. *See* Rock Against Police
Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie, 244
Rebelle (Matoub), 162, 182
Redjala, M'barek, 116
La Rek'ba (Duchêne), 38
Religious extremism, 25
Resistance dialogue, double movement of, 50–51
"La résurrection de l'Afrique latine," 31
Les rets de l'oiseleur, 163
La revue de l'Afrique du Nord, 29
Right to difference, 2
Roberts, Hugh, 3, 244
Roblès, Emmanuel, 45, 46, 251n69, 256n73
Rock Against Police (RAP), 126, 264n82
Roman Empire/Romans, 6, 13, 45; Christian, 32; city of Dougga, 230, 232–33; Duchêne's references to, 39, 250n50; failure to colonize Berbers, 51; Jugurtha's resistance against, 72–75, 116, 192–93, 207; "La sauce romaine," 31; Latin Africa, 30–31, 34; Latin script, 136; in Mediterranean humanism, 45–46; mythology of, 33; Paul's letter to, 99–100
Le roman indigène, 47–51
Le roman maghrébin (Khatibi), 251n74
Rouadjia, Ahmed, 125
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 86
RTF. *See* Radio Télévision Française
Rue des tambourins (Amrouche, T.), 77–80, 256n70
Ruptures, 162, 163

Sadi, Hend, 112, 256n75, 259n4
Sahli, Mohammed-Chérif, 63, 257n101
Said, Edward, 216
Saints, Berber worship of local, 259n5
Sakinna. *See* Boukhedenna, Sakinna
Salhi, Brahim, 120, 122
Salhi, Zahia, 273n26
Salvation Islamic Front, 187, 270n66
Le sang des races (Bertrand), 30
Sansal, Boualem, 245–46
Sans frontière, 125, 126
"La sauce romaine" (Olivaint), 31
Sayeh, Samira, 258n124
Sebbar, Leïla, 128–29, 265n105
Secessionist movement, Berber, 28, 249n7, 259n4
Sécurité militaire (SM), 113
Sénac, Jean, 166, 268n15
Servier, Jean, 260n29
Sétif massacre (1945), 52, 252n90
Si Diable veut (Dibb), 246
Silence, as unacceptable option, 170
Silverstein, Paul, 146, 266n132
Si Mohand-ou-Mhand, 52–53, 117, 161, 229
Si Muhand, U Mhend, 52–53
SM. *See* Sécurité militaire
SNED. *See* Société Nationale d'Edition et de Diffusion
Société Nationale d'Edition et de Diffusion (SNED), 267n5
Sofiane, 267n145
La soif (Djebar), 202
Solar man, 167, 258nn15–16; *Itij*, 121

"Soleil bafoué", 166
Solitude ma mère (Amrouche, T.), 76–77, 80
Solstice barbelé, 163
Le sommeil du juste (Mammeri), 17, 65, 91, 92–98, 261n30
SOS Racisme, 263n76
Soula, Madjid, 150
Le sourire de Brahim (Kettane), 144–45, 266n130
Soyinka, Wole, 159, 267n1
Spivak, Gayatri, 38
La statue de sel (Memmi), 74
Stora, Benjamin, 122
Strike of the school bag (la grève du cartable), 242

Tachawit, 14, 248n17
Tachelhit, 14
Tachenwit, 248n17
Tadjer, Akli, 109, 133, 138–40, 143–48
Taftilt (Light), 121
Taha, Rachid, 151
Taillefer, Jean-Paul, 263n70
Takfarinas, 152
Tamacheq, 14, 248n17
Tamazight, 24; as official Algerian language, 196, 243, 269n36. *See also* Berber language
Tamil, 247n4
tamohqranit (humiliation), 191–92
Tamzabit, 14, 248n17
Taourirt Moussa, Kabylia, 183
Taqbaylit (Kabyle language), 1, 12, 14, 254n11. *See also* Berber language
Tarifit, 14
Television: Beur TV, 145; ENTV, 214–15, 267n5, 273n22; Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française, 66–67, 261n37; Radio Télévision Française, 118, 261n37; SNED, ENTV, and ENL as voice FLN, 267n5, 273n22
"The Kabyle Song in France and the Memory of the Immigration," 26
Thompson, Victoria, 250n25
Tifinagh. *See* Berber alphabet
Tin Hinan (queen), 207, 218
Tisuraf (Small Steps), 117
Tiwizi (solidarity), 247n5
Tizi Ouzou, Kabylia, 1, 15, 114, 186; Jeunesse Electronique de Tizi-Ouzou, 259n15. *See also* University of Tizi Ouzou
"Tizi Ouzou," 151
Totalizing declarations, 23–24
Touaregs, 14, 260n23
La traversée (Mammeri), 91, 170
De Treize Poètes Algériens, 31–32
T-shirts, 8, *158*, 271n84; Tifinagh letters on, 259n13
Tunisian Berbers, 13, 14, 17; Amazigh renaissance among contemporary, 243; Amrouche family's exile to Tunisia, 65, 66, 75, 78; angst among, 245; at Berber Academy in Paris, 260n23; in France, 123; *Les villes d'or Algérie et Tunisie romaines*, 30

Underground fighting, 252n97
Une fille sans histoire (Imache), 137–38
Ungaretti, Giuseppe, 69
L'universel, c'est le local moins les murs, 2
University of Algiers, 112–13; Cercle Culturel Berbère formation at, 121; Mammeri's Berber course at, 117–18, 121
University of Paris VIII, 116–17, 247n4, 260n26
University of Tizi Ouzou: as center for protest, 121, 191; Mammeri at, 118, 121–22
Un passager de l'occident (Farès), 20

Vaste est la prison (Djebar), 19, 206–7; as genealogy of rupture, 217–19; Hiddleston on, 204, 275n79; Nahlovsky on, 276n94; road to, 208–10
"La vengeance du cheikh" (Ben Rahal), 48
Vgayet, 15
Villages, 5, 57, 104; Aït Adella village, *158*; Algerian Arabic spoken in, 55, 270n79; Benni Yenni, 56; *Les chercheurs d'os*, 19, 165, 175; Djaout's relationship to, 162–65; *L'invention du désert*, 19, 165–71; Matoub and Djaout from within and without, 159; Matoub depiction, *157*; Taourirt Moussa, Kabilya, 183; Tiwizi concept, 247n5
Les villes d'or Algerie et Tunisie romaines (Bertrand), 30–31
"A Voice that Would Not Be Silenced" (Soyinka), 267n1
"Voyage dans le soleil", 166

Western heritage, 24–25
White Americans, 20–21
White Mythologies (Young), 217
Williams, Raymond, 266n132, 274n51
"Women Make Movies," 272n17
The Words to Say It (Cardinal), 20–21

Yacine, Kateb, 58, 111, 121, 150, 174, 253n3, 256n73, 262n52; Djaout's admiration for, 268n35; son's name, 7
Yacine, Tassadit, 75, 106
Yahia, Rachid Ali, 53–54, 252n97
Yakouren debate, 122
El Yazami, Driss, 125

"Les Yeux de la langue" (Djebar), 238–39
Yougourthen, 267n145
Young, Robert, 217

Zaama d'Banlieue, 127
Zebda, 151
Zehar, Aïssa, 48, 252n84
Zehraoui, Ahsène, 129–30, 264n87
Zenati, Rabah, 48
Ziane, Farida, 183, 184, 186
Zimra, Clarisse, 272n17
Zohra, la femme du mineur (Abdelkader), 48, 50
Zouaoua, 269n51

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